

FIG. 1

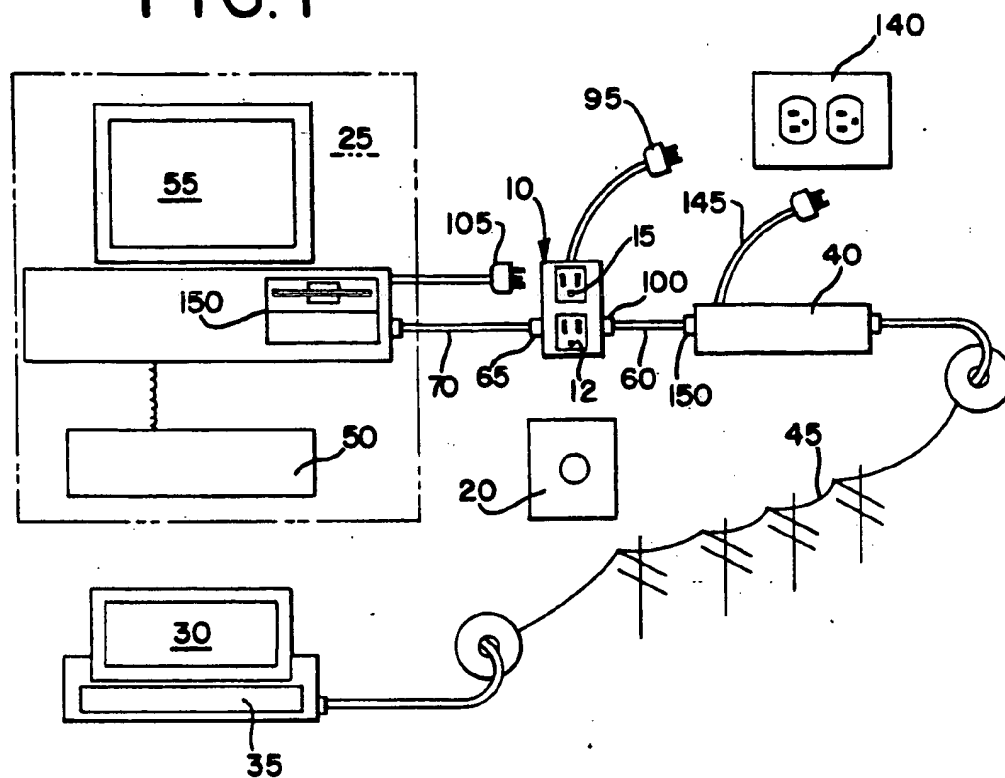
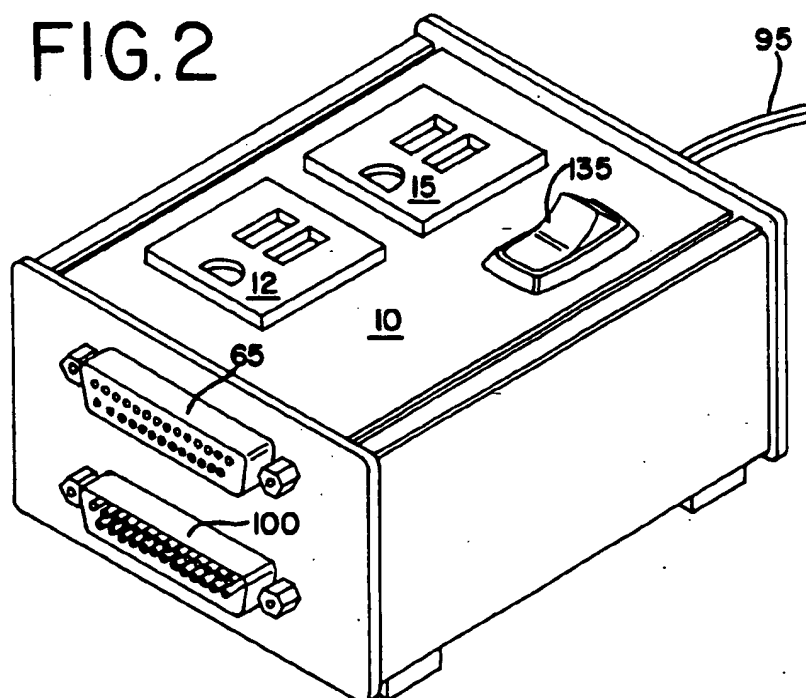
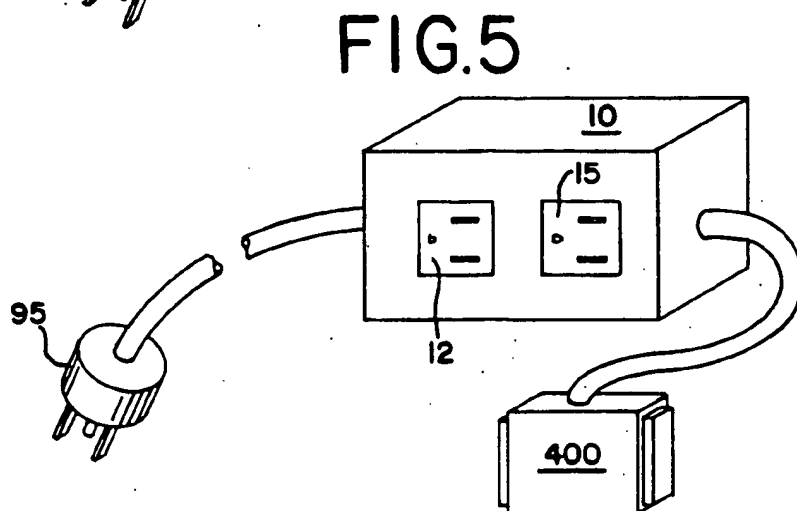
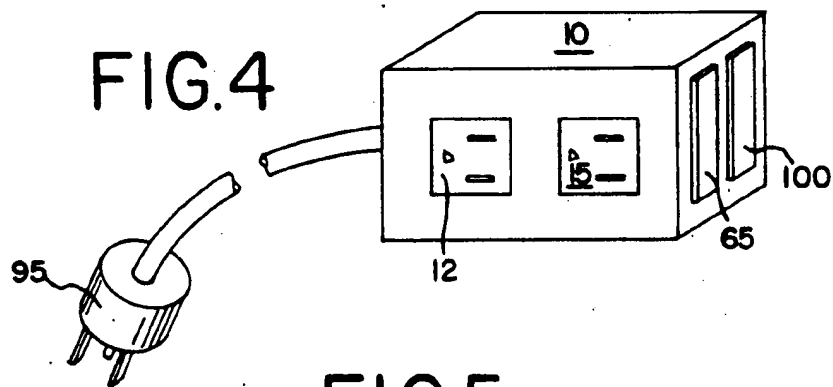
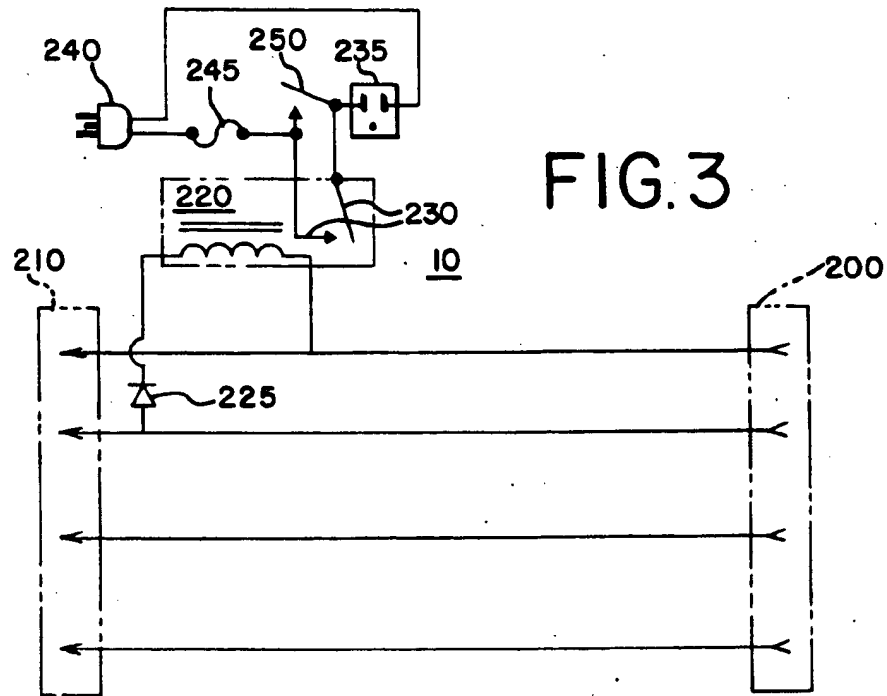
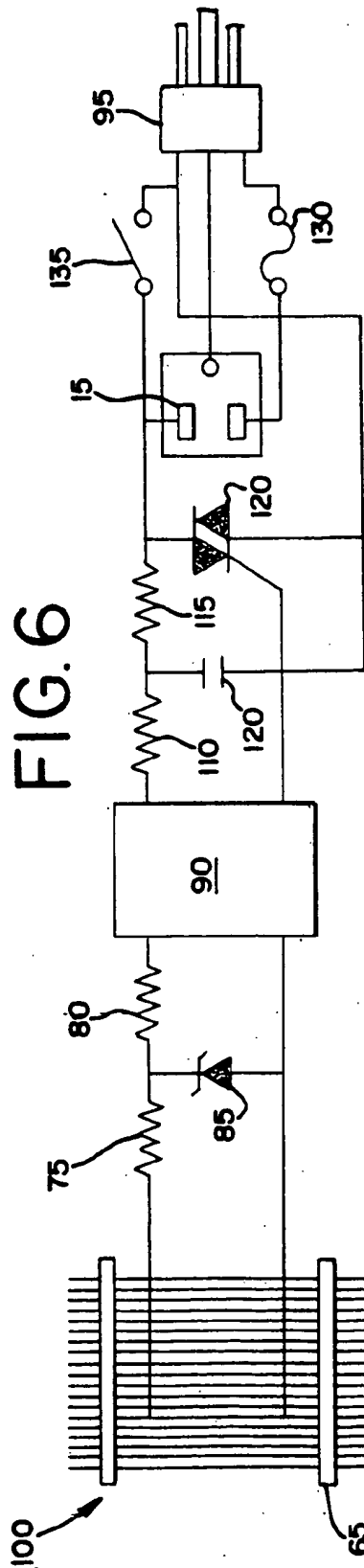


FIG. 2







REMOTE CONTROL AND SECURE ACCESS FOR PERSONAL COMPUTERS

This invention relates to a remote control for computer systems and particularly to an apparatus for the activation and secure access of a remotely located computer system.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

There is a need for a reliable and secure means for activating and accessing a remote computer or computer system. One area in which the need is currently acute is in the transfer of data between a lap top or a portable computer and a remote data base computer system which is primarily stationary. There are two problems. Either the portable computer is unable to contain all the data it needs to access for some applications; or it is not practical to keep a remote data base computer system active continuously and vulnerable to unauthorized access.

It is therefore important to have an apparatus for activating or de-activating a remote computer via a serial link such as a conventional telephone modem link. Upon detection of a recognizable and compatible transmission through a modem, the present invention activates a power switching device supplying power to the local computer rendering it operative from a remote location. Once operable, the invention software is loaded up and executed automatically to prevent any further access or use until the correct code is transmitted. Upon any interruption or termination of the transmission the local computer is secured and deactivated. No known device accomplishes these innovative tasks.

In the past, devices for starting up a computer remotely via telephone line has been utilized. For example, U.S. Pat. No. 4,701,946 to Oliva et al: discloses a logic means between a modem and a computer, which monitors the modem output and then can activate the computer. U.S. Pat. No. 4,723,269 to Summerlin, disclosed a circuit for starting up an unattended computer via phone line or by preprogramming by means of a ring detector and an optically coupled triac. In each of these disclosures, no mention of security coding is made.

In U.S. Pat. No. 4,647,721 to Busam et al: a telephone activated power controller detects a telephone ringing signal or off-hook condition on an incoming telephone line and powers up the stationary unattended computer which is connected both directly and via a modem. In the above references, no provisions have been made for secure access to the system.

Other inventions have afforded some security means, but differ vastly in other means. In U.S. Pat. No. 3,984,637 to Caudill et al; the system disclosed connects a computer to a transmission path only when a predetermined code is received. Two individual codes are needed for operation. The drawback to this device is that the power supply to the unattended stationary computer is not controlled requiring the computer to be on constantly and the resultant equipment failures and breakdown caused thereby.

Other coding security devices are known, but without the same function as the present invention. U.S. Pat. No. 4,006,316 to Bolgiano; discloses a telephone remote control system with coding by the use of touch tone transmitted digits without the use of a modem. U.S. Pat. No. 4,733,345 to Anderson; discloses a computer tele-

phone security device which compares passwords from a master unit and a remote terminals slave unit.

A known device which powers up computer equipment remotely via a standard communication lines to transmit control and identification signals is U.S. Pat. No. 4,206,444 to Ferlan. However, such a device discloses and utilizes complicated and less flexible circuitry in comparison to the simple and more flexible design of the present invention. Ferlan does not allow for changing access codes remotely because, codes are burn-in on a PROM. Furthermore, the invention is limited to a set number of characters for an access code unable to provide greater security. Ferlan in relation to the present invention has a number of hardware limitations instead of software.

No known device provides a low cost simple solution to allow a remote terminal to activate or deactivate an unattended computer system and provide secure access to its files and programs.

Currently, a means for providing secure access is only available on large computer systems with an operating system that is designed to provide this function, and is not generally available for the common and more prolific so called personal computer. Additionally there is not a means to keep power removed from a computer system until such time that remote access is required.

As a result, it is a principal object of the present invention to provide an apparatus for activating or deactivating a remotely located computer via a serial communication link such as but not limited to a standard telephone/modem link.

It is another object to provide an inexpensive means to allow secure access to a remotely located computer such as, but not limited to a personal computer.

It is yet another object to control and reduce the time unused remote computer equipment is left powered up and not used thereby increasing the systems life, reduce electrical consumption and protect the system from power surges.

It is still yet another object to be readily adaptable to conventional modem control and telecommunication programs currently in use.

It is still yet another object to have many remote computers to be able to securely access the home or local computer.

Numerous other advantages and features of the invention will become readily apparent from the detailed description of the preferred embodiment of the invention, from the claims, and from the accompanying drawings, in which like numerals are employed to designate like parts throughout the same.

BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention is an apparatus for activating or deactivating a remotely located computer via a serial communication link such as but not limited to a telephone/modem link. A means to allow secure access to a remotely located computer via serial communication link. The invention consists of a remote terminal or computer with a conventional modem which is in electrical communication to telephone lines or a private network access which will carry signals to a local interface point to be in electrical communication with second conventional modem which is in electrical communication with the present invention in order to receive both control and data communication. The present invention and the external modem are supplied with operating power continuously. The local computer's

power is connected to the switched power source of the present invention. A communication link connects the invention to the local computer which passes both control and data exchange via this link. The power to the local computer is controlled by the present invention. The control software which makes the invention operative and controls the local computer, can reside on a floppy disc, hard disc or any other non-volatile program storage medium that is used to provide boot-up instructions to the local computer. The logic software, establishes, upon power up via request from the remote terminal, through the telephone lines to the external modem and then the present invention, if access to the local computer should be granted upon the transmission of the proper coded password from the remote terminal or modem.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 depicts a schematic diagram of the present invention and its interconnection to a remote and local systems;

FIG. 2 depicts a typical housing configuration of one of the embodiments of the present invention;

FIG. 3 shows the schematic diagram of the electronic circuitry involved in an alternative embodiment of the invention;

FIG. 4 depicts a typical housing configuration of the present invention;

FIG. 5 depicts an alternative housing configuration of the present invention; and

FIG. 6 depicts the preferred embodiment of the electronic circuitry of the present invention.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

While the invention is susceptible of embodiment in many different forms, there is shown in the drawings and will be described herein in detail, a preferred and alternative embodiment of the invention. It should be understood, however, that the present disclosure is to be considered an exemplification of the principles of the invention and is not intended to limit the spirit and scope of the invention and/or claims of the embodiment illustrated.

As depicted in FIG. 1, the present invention 10 comprising of a remote controlled power switched outlet 15, unswitched outlet 12 and security access software 20 which allows the local computer 25 to be accessed by a remote terminal or computer 30 and modem 35 without operator intervention when the local computer 25 is not currently activated. The invention 10 also de-activates the local computer 25 when access has terminated or has been denied. Access is only granted to a remote computer 30 and modem 35 that has transmitted the proper coded password. The password resides in software which is contained on disk 20 and is recognizable and authenticated when disk 20 is read on local computer 25 in a conventional manner in response to communication from an input entered into remote computer 30. It is understood that the password may also reside in other memory mediums and reside in or to be read by remote computer 30. The invention 10 is utilized in conjunction with an external modem 40 and requires no modification of either the local computer 25 or modem 40 hardware.

With the local computer 25 having power removed by the power switched outlet 15, and modem 40 being powered up by power cord 145 and outlet 140 and

monitoring the status of an interconnect means or public or private access network 45, the invention 10 awaits a signal via connector 150, cable 60 and connector 100 from the modem 40 signaling that a call has been answered and the caller has been identified as being a remote terminal or computer 35 requiring access to the local computer 25. Outlet 12 is unswitched and provides power for other computer equipment or even modem 40. At this point, the invention 10, through power switched outlet 15, provides power to the local computer 25 which automatically accesses the security access software 20 which resides on a conventional floppy disk medium which is by read by disk drive 150 in local computer 25 that prevents any access to the local computer 25 until the proper coded password has been received from the remote terminal or computer 30 and modem 35.

Upon receipt of the correct coded password a communication link is established via remote modem 35, interconnect means 45, modem 40, interconnect cable 60, the invention 10 and cable 70, between the remote terminal or computer 30 and the local computer 25.

Upon receipt of the correct coded password the interconnect means 45 or communication link between the remote terminal or computer 30 and modem 35, and the local computer 25 is established. The remote terminal or computer 30 and modem 35, virtually become the local computer's 25 keyboard or console device 50 thereby allowing full access to the local computer's 25 resources as if the remote operator were sitting in front of the local computer's 25 keyboard 50 and display screen 55. When access is no longer required or the carrier is lost, the local computer 25 is deactivated thereby conserving energy and extending its useful life.

Depicted in FIGS. 1 and 6 is a suggested schematic of the electronic circuitry involved in the preferred embodiment of the invention. Modem 40 is powered by power cord 145 and outlet 140. Connector 150 on modem 40 interconnects all of the signals carried by the interface cable 60 to connector 100 on invention 10. Connector 65 on invention 10 interconnects all of the signals brought in on connector 100 and forms a connection with interface cable 70 which in turn connects to the serial communication port of local computer 25.

A current limiting resistor 75 (typical value of 220 ohms) is used in conjunction with zener diode 85 (typical device 1N4732) to form a controlled voltage source fed by a portion of the current being used to signal that the carrier of the remote terminal or computer 30 and modem 35 has been detected and is present, establishing the first precursor to accessing the local computer 25.

A current limiting resistor 80 (typical value of 100 ohms) is used to pass a controlled current to the optotriac 90 (typical device MCP3011 or equivalent is commonly available from Motorola, Inc. of Schaumburg, Ill.) activating and de-activating it in concert with the carrier detect signal from modem 40.

The optically activated triac 90 provides electrical isolation between low voltage signals used within the computer 25 and modem 30, so that the operator is prevented from coming in direct contact with the 110 Volt alternating current utility power supplied by power cord 95 being used to power the invention 10 and indirectly the local computer 25 by power cord 105. This is done to provide protection from possible electrical shock and to meet safety requirements and regulations.

A resistor 110 (typical value 220 ohms) in conjunction with resistor 115 (typical value 2.2K ohms) and filter capacitor 120 (typical value 0.1 uf) form a filtered current source used to control power triac 120 (typical device T810DJ which is commonly available from Tag Semiconductors Ltd., (A Raytheon Company) Hohlstrasse 608/610, CH-8048 Zurich, via the optically activated triac 90 which in turn is being activated or deactivated by the carrier detect signal being generated by the modem 40. Power triac 120 in turn switches power to local computer 25 via switch receptacle 15.

The values of the discrete components identified in the operative description above have been selected by the following criteria. Resistor values 75, 80 and zener diode 85 as depicted in FIG. 6, are selected to protect the opto-triac 90 from being damaged by higher than anticipated voltages being placed across connectors 65 or 100. They are further selected to protect the opto-triac 90 from negative voltage intentionally generated by the typical line driver circuitry which is commonly used in the output of a modem 50. Furthermore, they are selected to guarantee operation in worst case scenario conditions and to provide sufficient signal level to a typical line receiver found commonly in the serial port of a computer 25.

The maximum forward current opto-triac 90 in the case of the MCP3011 can tolerate is 60 milliamps. A zener diode 85 in the case of a IN4732 at the common node of resistors 75 and 80, limits the voltage to 4.7 volts. Therefore the maximum current to the opto-triac 90 is calculated as: (Zener reverse voltage—Opto-triac forward voltage)/Resistor 80 resistance. Inserting typical values: $(4.7 - 1.2)/100 = 35$ milliamps. The maximum reverse voltage the opto-triac 90 can tolerate is 3.0 volts. Zener diode 85 limits this voltage to its forward drop of 0.7 volts. Resistor 75 assists in limiting the power dissipated in zener diode 85 while decreasing loading insuring that a line receiver will continue to operate reliably.

The minimum current that the opto-triac 90 requires is 5 milliamps. Therefore given a worst case scenario, if a line driver is powered with a ± 5.0 volt supply it can only supply 4.7 volts to the output and would typically have a source impedance of no more than 370 ohms. With resistor 75 and 80 being values 220 and 100 ohms respectively, the minimum current will be: (line driver output voltage—opto-triac forward voltage drop)/(line driver source impedance—resistor 75—resistor 80). Inserting in the typical values: $(4.7 - 1.2)/(370 + 220 + 100) = 5.07$ milliamperes. Even in this worst case scenario the resultant voltage is sufficient to meet a line receivers input requirements. It is understood that different combinations of component values will likewise perform commensurately per the criteria and calculations suggested above.

A fuse 130 (typical value of 5 amps) provides over current protection to the invention 10 and local computer 25.

A bypass switch 135 (typically a single pole, single throw type or the equivalent) allows power to be applied to the local computer 25 directly, overriding the control imposed by the presence or absence of the carrier detect signal, allowing local operation of computer 25.

Secure access of local computer 25 is achieved by the joint use of conventional software techniques and software commercially available, such as, but not limited to, Micro-Soft's (Microsoft Corporation, 16011 NE

36th Way, Redmond, Wash.) MS-DOS AUTOEXEC.BAT handling facility and the invention's security access software 20. Shown in the table below are the invention's security access software commands that are placed in the AUTOEXEC.BAT file and a description of their functions. One of ordinary skill in the art would understand these common functions in common commercially available software such as this. Micro-Soft's MS-DOS AUTOEXEC.BAT handling facility allows the computer 25 to execute a predetermined set of user defined commands located in the AUTOEXEC.BAT file located on computer 25 floppy disk drive 150 automatically upon power up. The invention's 10 security access software 20 inserts several commands into this AUTOEXEC.BAT file to do the following:

COMMAND	DESCRIPTION OF FUNCTION
echo off	Suppresses any output from local computer 25 including the echoing back of inputted information.
mode com1:l200,n,8,2	Sets up a compatible serial interface protocol with the external modem 40 via cable 70, connector 65, invention 10, connection 100, cable 60 and connector 150.
psw 1 PASSWORD	Invention's secure access software 20 that inputs an ASCII string terminated by a carriage return from the remote computer or terminal 30 and modem 35 via aforementioned communication link, compares it to the PASSWORD string placed in this command, and continues to repeat this process and in doing so suspends any further usefulness of local computer 25 until a password match is made.
ctty com1:	Re-directs local computer 25 console functions, keyboard 50 and display 55 to the remote computer or terminal 30 and modem 35 via aforementioned communication link.

The result is that upon power up of local computer 25 by the invention 10 as a result of the action of remote computer or terminal 30 and modem 35 seeking access to local computer 25, secure access of local computer 25 is awarded upon recognition of a password being any set of ASCII characters that the software is pre-programmed to recognize, thereby granting entry to the full functionality of the local computer 25's operating system, data, programs or in general use if accessing user at remote computer 30 was in the presence of local computer 25.

Passwords in the software once accessible may be changed as desired by the user at either the local computer 25 or remote computer 30.

Depicted in FIGS. 1 and 3 is a electronic circuitry schematic of an alternative embodiment of the invention 10. Its operation is simply and effectively described as follows. The connector 100 on invention 10, acts as an interconnect between the modem 4 and the serial port of the local computer 25 via connector 65. All signals from the modem 40 and computer 25 are passed via this connection which to the electronical communication transmitted so that the invention 10 appears to be electronically transparent. One particular signal, namely the carrier detect from modem 40 which is sensed by a conventional sensitive electromechanical relay 220 (typical device Stancor Part No. MS64-931 manufactured by Hamilton Standard Controls, 131 Godfrey, St. Logansport, Ind.) via rectifying diode 225 (typically a 1N914 or equivalent) which is carried by

interconnecting cable 60 and generated by modem 40 in response to a signal carried via the interconnect means 45 which is placed thereupon from remote computer or terminal 30 by local modem 35 when computer or terminal 30 requires access to remote computer 25. Diode 225 is used to isolate the proper sense of the carrier detect signal which conforms to any standard data communications interface in use and commonly available.

A standard data communication interface specifies various electrical and mechanical characteristics for communication interfaces between computers, terminals, and modems, including an interface consisting of 25 pins or leads, each of which provides a function, such as timing, control, or the sending of data. The present invention is not intended to be limited to this standard interface solely and it is envisioned that other standards will likewise be applicable. The preferred embodiment may use a well known specification known as Electronic Industries Association's RS232-C specification which provides a positive voltage relative to ground indicating carrier present and negative voltage relative to ground indicating not present. The carrier detect signal is generated by the modem 40 when the carrier from a remote modem 35 is detected and found to be compatible for the communication exchange required. The sensitive electromechanical relay 220 in turn applies power via relay contacts 230 to the local computer 25 via power receptacle 15. Power plug 95 is connected to the source of uninterruptable power while fuse 245 offers over current protection to the invention 10 and local computer 25. A bypass switch 135 (typically single pole-single throw or equivalent) imposed by the presence or absence of the carrier detect signal, allowing local operation of computer 25.

FIG. 2 depicts another method of housing the present invention. The components identified are the same as those shown in the preferred embodiment.

FIG. 4 depicts one method of packaging the circuitry where by all the communication lines are passed through the power switching enclosure. The component features numbers are for the same as shown in the preferred embodiments.

FIG. 5 depicts another method of packaging the circuitry where by only the necessary communication signals are tapped off a cable adapter 400 which is of RS232-C or equivalent near the modem or the computer's serial port then carried back to the power switching enclosure.

Depicted in FIG. 6 is the schematic of the electronic circuitry involved in the preferred embodiment of the invention.

The foregoing specification describes only the preferred embodiment of the invention as shown. Other embodiments besides the ones shown, described and claimed may be articulated as well. The terms and expressions therefore serve only to describe the invention by example only and not to limit the invention. It is expected that others will perceive differences which while differing from the foregoing, do not depart from the spirit and scope of the invention herein described and claimed.

What is claimed is:

1. A secure activator device for use in activating computer equipment remotely, comprising:

a first computer system having an interconnect means for communicating with other computers remotely, said first computer system having a first

modem in electrical communication with said interconnect means;

at least one second computer system having an interconnect means for communicating with other computers remotely, said at least one second computer system having a second modem in electrical communication with said interconnect means; and
activator means for providing power to said first computer system, said activator means in electrical communication between said first modem and said second modem by said interconnect means, such that when at least one said second computer system requests data communication with said first computer system by communicating a password to said activator means, which upon recognition thereof said activator means provides power to said first computer system and thereupon authentication of the password by computer software stored in said first computer system, said activator means provides electrical communication access to said first computer system.

2. The secure activator device of claim 1, wherein said activator means is comprised of circuitry having a power activating triac which is conditioned by a carrier signal generated by said second modem.

3. The secure activator device of claim 1, wherein said activator means is comprised of circuitry having a power activating triac which first is conditioned by a carrier detect signal generated by said first modem.

4. The secure activator device of claim 3 wherein said activator means is further comprised of an optically isolated triac.

5. A secure activator device for use in activating computer equipment remotely, comprising:

a first computer system having an interconnect means for communicating with other computers remotely, said first computer system having a first modem in electrical communication with said interconnect means;

at least one second computer system having an interconnect means for communicating with other computers remotely, said at least one second computer system having a second modem in electrical communication with said interconnect means; and

activator means for providing power to said first computer system, said activator means in electrical communication between said first modem and said second modem by said interconnect means, such that when at least one said second computer system requests data communication with said first computer system by communicating a password to said activator means, which upon recognition and authentication of the password by computer software stored in said first computer system, said activator means provides electrical communication access to said first computer system.

6. The secure activator device of claim 5 wherein said activator means is comprised of circuitry having a power activating triac which is conditioned by a carrier signal generated by said second modem.

7. The secure activator device of claim 5 wherein said activator means is comprised of circuitry having a power activating triac which first is conditioned by a carrier detect signal generated by said first modem.

8. The secure activator device of claim 6 wherein said activator means is further comprised of an optically isolated triac.

9. The secure activator device of claim 7 wherein said activator means is further comprised of an optically isolated triac.

10. A secure computer activation device for use in activating a local computer system by a remote computer system comprising:

interconnect interface means for electronically communicating data between the local computer system and the remote computer system; and

activator means for controlling the power to the local computer system, said activator means in electrical communication with said interconnect interface means between the local computer system and the remote computer system, said activator means supplies power to the local computer system and further electrical communication access via recognition of a password electrically communicated from the remote computer system through said interconnect interface means to the local computer system, wherein said password is recognized and authenticated by computer software stored in the local computer system.

11. The secure computer activation device of claim 10 wherein said interconnect interface means is further comprised of at least two modem.

12. The secure computer activation device of claim 10, wherein said activator means is comprised of circuitry having a power activating triac which is conditioned by a carrier detect signal generated by said interconnect interface means.

13. The secure computer activation device of claim 11 wherein said activator means is comprised of circuitry having a power activating triac which is condi-

tioned by a carrier detect signal generated by said at least two modems.

14. The secure computer activation device of claim 13 wherein said power activating triac is an optically isolated triac.

15. The secure computer activation device of claim 10 wherein said password is a set of electronic signals recognized by said software stored in the local computer system.

16. A computer activation device for use in securely activating a local computer system with modem by a signal communicated utilizing standard interconnect lines from a remote computer system with modem, comprising:

activator means for controlling the power to the local computer system, said activator means in data communication with the modems of the remote and local computer systems; said activator means provides the power to the local computer system upon receipt and recognition by the local computer system of a required password from the remote computer system via the standard interconnect lines.

17. The computer activation device of claim 16 wherein said activator means is comprised of circuitry having a power activating triac which is conditioned by a carrier signal generated by the modem of remote computer system.

18. The computer activation device of claim 17 wherein said power activated triac is an optical activated triac.

19. The computer activation device of claim 16 wherein said activator means comprises a relay to apply operative power to the local computer system.

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United States Patent [19]
Mori

[11] **Patent Number:** **4,754,268**
[45] **Date of Patent:** **Jun. 28, 1988**

[54] **WIRELESS MOUSE APPARATUS**
[75] **Inventor:** Akira Mori, Osaka, Japan
[73] **Assignee:** Mitsubishi Belting Ltd., Kobe, Japan
[21] **Appl. No.:** 768,737

[22] **Filed:** Aug. 23, 1985

[30] **Foreign Application Priority Data**

Oct. 23, 1984 [JP] Japan 59-214663

[51] **Int. Cl.⁴** G09G 1/00

[52] **U.S. Cl.** 340/710; 340/706;
178/18; 455/100; 455/125; 455/128

[58] **Field of Search** 340/710, 709, 706;
178/18; 273/148 B; 235/472; 455/100, 120,
125, 128, 95, 119, 603

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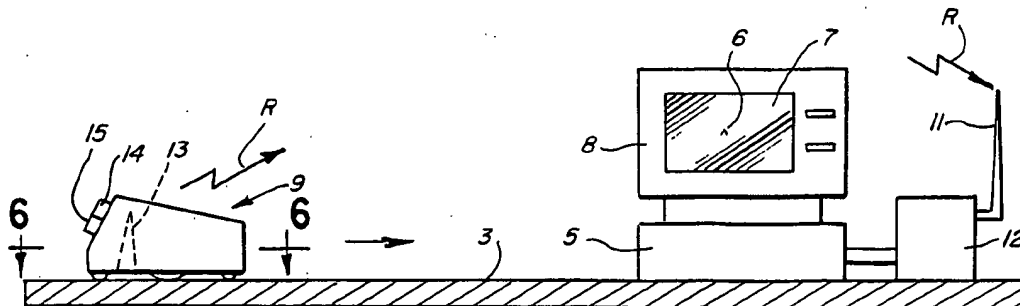
Primary Examiner—Marshall M. Curtis

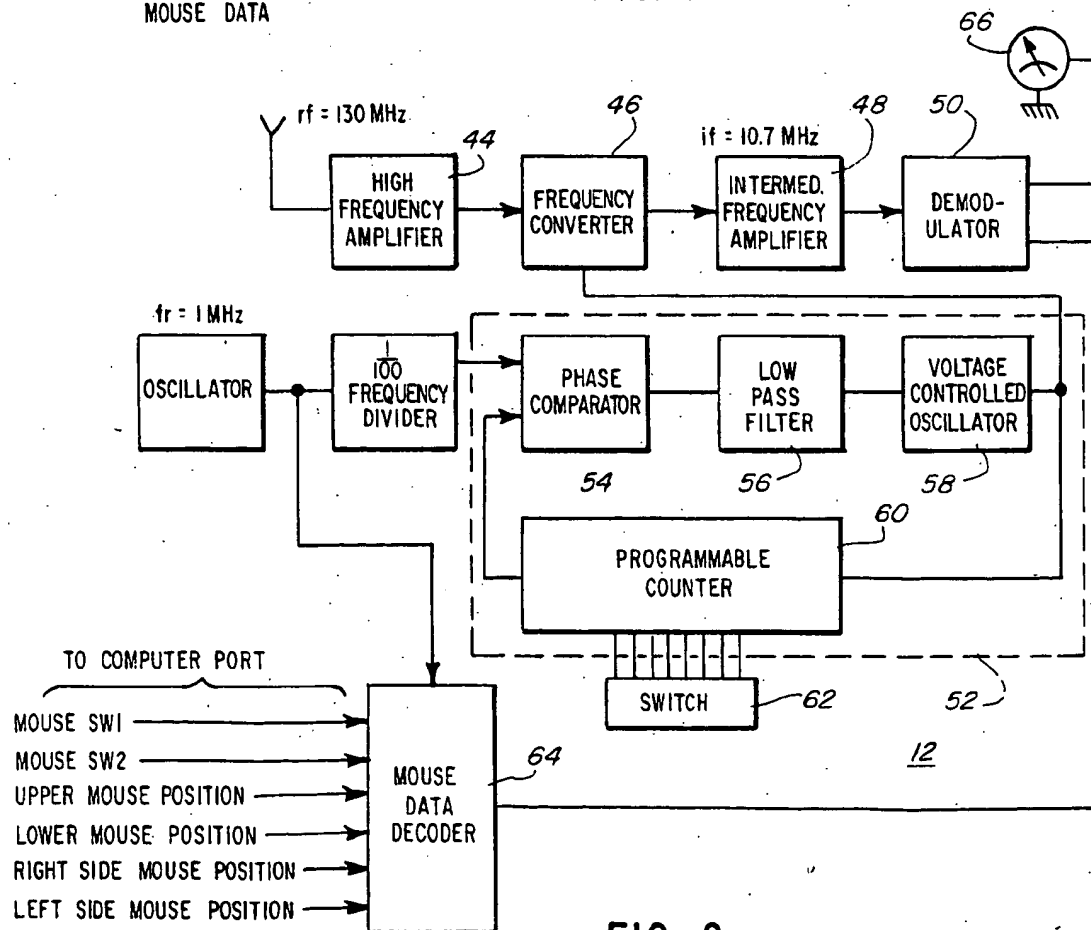
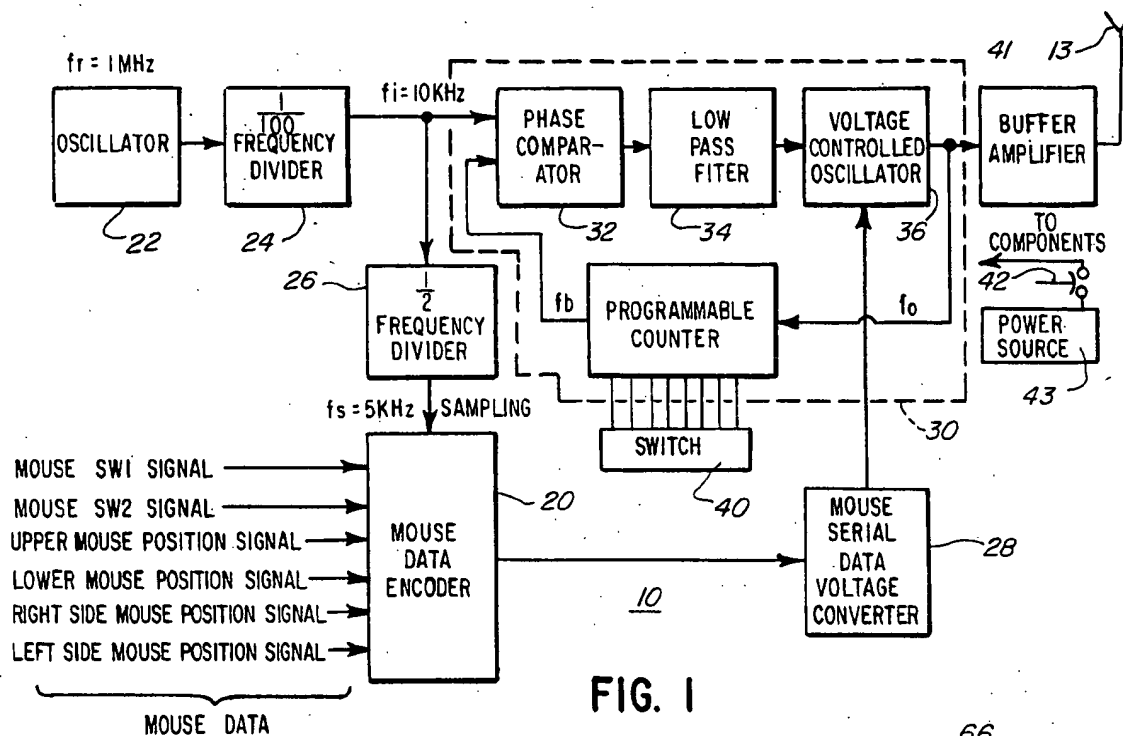
Attorney, Agent, or Firm—Wood, Dalton, Phillips, Mason & Rowe

[57] **ABSTRACT**

In a computer system comprising a computer having a keyboard, and a display device connected to the computer, an improved position indicator means comprising a mouse having means responsive to movement thereof over a support surface for generating electrical signals indicating the positioning of the mouse, power source means carried by the mouse, circuit means powered by said power source means for generating and transmitting radio signals corresponding to said electrical signal, and processing means associated with said computer for receiving said radio signal and converting said radio signal into a display on said display device positioned corresponding to the positioning of said mouse.

13 Claims, 2 Drawing Sheets





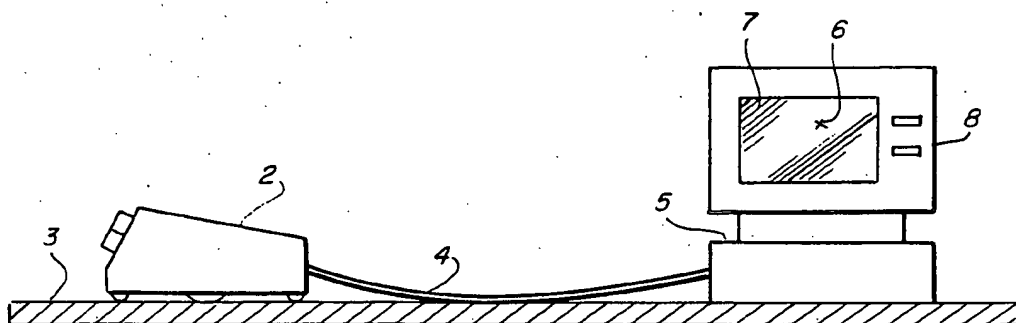


FIG. 3 PRIOR ART

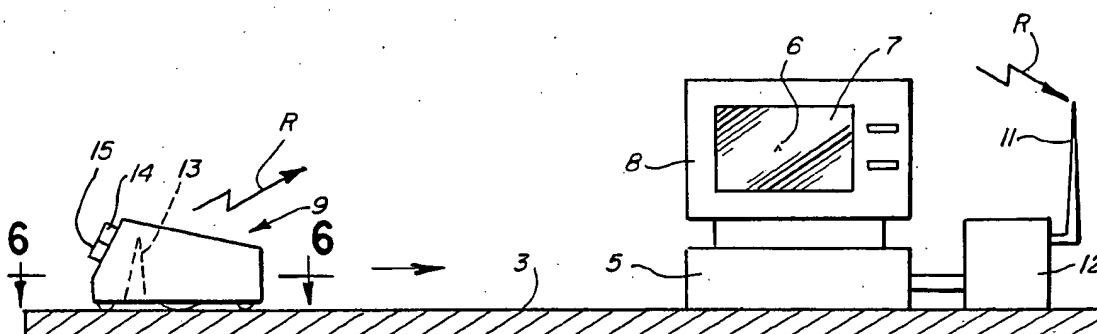


FIG. 4

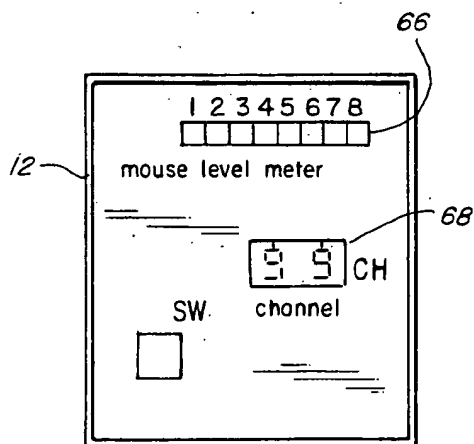


FIG. 5

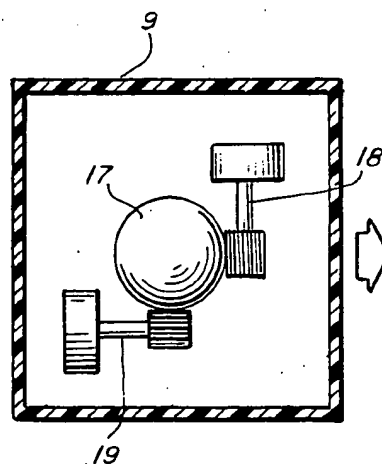


FIG. 6

WIRELESS MOUSE APPARATUS

Conventional types of such a mouse include a mechanical type and an optical type. The mechanical type mouse is illustrated in FIG. 6 as described in greater detail here following. Briefly the mechanical type mouse includes a longitudinal direction sensor 18 and a lateral direction sensor 19 responsive to revolution of a sensing ball 17 adapted to roll on the subjacent surface. In the optical type mouse, a light emitting diode and a phototransistor are associated with a grid or map to provide a signal corresponding to the distance and direction of movement of the mouse. The conventional mouse, whether it be the mechanical or optical type, is arranged to effect selective positioning of the cursor on the computer monitor screen by output signals coordinated with the state of a control switch for selectively executing a selected function.

The physical connection of the mouse to the host computer by the cable undesirably restricts free movement of the mouse and may effect undesirable movement. Further constant bending or twisting of the cable may effect deterioration thereof so as to result in disconnection or improper contact of connectors at opposite ends of the cable.

Another problem arising from the conventional cable connected mouse is the handiness of the operation. Thus the conventional mouse is arranged for right handed operation rendering it difficult for use by left handed people. While a left handed mouse may be constructed, this requires a special configuration increasing the cost and presenting service and other similar problems. Where a left handed person uses the conventional right handed mouse, the cable is inconveniently disposed and may present interference problems.

Still another problem with the conventional cable connected mouse is the limitation on the relative positioning of the mouse with respect to the host computer occasioned by the innerconnecting wires.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention comprehends an improved mouse type positioning indicator for use with a computer which eliminates the disadvantages of the above discussed prior art mouse devices in a novel and simple manner.

More specifically the present invention comprehends the provision of a new and improved computer mouse or position indicator, which is arranged to provide indications of the change in positioning of the mouse on a subjacent surface in the form of an electrical signal which is transmitted to the host computer by electromagnetic radiation or radio waves.

The invention further comprehends a provision of power source means within the mouse for operating the radio wave transmitting means.

The invention comprehends that the host computer include radio wave receiving means for receiving and demodulating the transmitted radio wave from the mouse and circuitry for providing the resultant information signal for suitable use by the host computer.

The mouse further includes switch means, the arrangement of which is also transmitted to the host computer for use in controlling the transfer of information.

Coding of the transmitted signal into the necessary format for the specific host computer is effected at the receiver. Illustratively the decoded information may be

used to move a cursor on the display screen in correspondence with the movement of the mouse.

A common signal from the switch associated with the mouse or from the input of the keyboard associated with the computer may be utilized in cooperation with the positioning of the cursor so as to permit inputting of desired data to the computer.

Thus more specifically the invention comprehends the provision in a computer system having a host computer including a keyboard and a display device connected to the computer, an improved position indicator means including a mouse having means responsive to movement thereof over a support surface for generating electrical signals indicating the positioning of the mouse, power source means carried by the mouse, circuit means powered by said power source means for generating and transmitting radio signals corresponding to said electrical signal and processing means associated with said computer for receiving said radio signal and converting said radio signal into a display on said display device positioned corresponding to the positioning of said mouse.

Still further the invention comprehends the provision of such an apparatus including a mouse, a transducer for converting the position of the mouse on a subjacent surface into an electric signal indicative of the position of the mouse, a switch carried by the mouse, radio transmitting means for generating a modulated radio wave signal corresponding to said electric signal and the arrangement of said switch, power source means carried by said mouse, receiving means for receiving and demodulating said signal from the radio transmitting means and means for utilizing the demodulated signal in a computer.

In the illustrated embodiment, the radio wave transmitting means comprises frequency modulating means.

In the illustrated embodiment the apparatus includes means for converting between analog and digital signals.

The invention comprehends providing means for permitting the mouse to transmit on any one of a plurality of different frequencies so as to permit selective use of a number of similar radio wave transmitting mice to different host computers within the same general environmental space.

The computer device position indicator means of the present invention is extremely simple and economical construction while yet providing the highly desirable features discussed above.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWING

FIG. 1 is a block diagram illustrating circuitry of a mouse;

FIG. 2 is a block diagram illustrating circuitry of a receiver;

FIG. 3 is a front elevation of a prior art apparatus;

FIG. 4 is a front elevation of apparatus of the present invention;

FIG. 5 is an elevation of the control panel of the receiver; and

FIG. 6 is a schematic illustration of one form of mouse transducer for use with the present invention.

BEST MODE FOR CARRYING OUT THE INVENTION

Referring now to FIG. 3, a conventional mouse 2 is supported upon a subjacent surface 3. The conventional mouse 2 is physically connected by a cable 4 to a host

computer 5, and data can be electrically transmitted via a cable 4 between the conventional mouse 2 and the host computer 5. The data is typically utilized to control the position of a cursor 6 on a display 7 of a monitor 8.

Referring now to FIG. 4, a preferred embodiment of the present invention comprises a radio wave mouse (hereinafter mouse) 9 for transmitting data via a radio signal R to a receiving antenna 11 of a receiver 12 connected to the host computer 5. The radio signal R is transmitted from the mouse 9 by means of a transmitting antenna 13 associated with transmitter circuitry 10 contained within the mouse 9.

The radio signal R comprises four position signals consisting of an upper mouse position signal, a lower mouse position signal, a right side mouse position signal and a left side mouse position signal corresponding to movement of the mouse in four orthogonally related directions.

Further, the radio signal R comprises command signals generated in response to actuation of switches 14, 15. Such switches and the use thereof are well known to those skilled in the art.

Referring to FIG. 6, illustrated is a mouse transducer 16 utilized in conjunction with a mechanical type mouse. The mouse transducer 16 comprises a ball 17, a longitudinal direction sensor 18 and a lateral direction sensor 19. Movement of the mouse 5 along the subjacent surface 3 cause the ball 17 to rotate. Rotation of the ball 17 causes a concurrent rotation of the longitudinal and lateral direction sensors 18, 19. The longitudinal and lateral direction sensors 18, 19 reduce the movement of the mouse 5 into orthogonal components, and values of the orthogonal components comprise the upper, lower, right side and left side position signals.

Referring now to FIG. 1, illustrated is a block diagram of transmitter circuitry 10 contained within the mouse 9. Digital signals generated by the mouse transducer 16 in response to movement of the mouse 9 along the subjacent surface 3, hereinafter collectively referred to as mouse data, are entered to a mouse data encoder 20.

A first oscillator 22 coupled to a first frequency divider 24 generates a first oscillator signal having a frequency of 1 MHz. The first frequency divider 24 reduces the frequency of the first oscillator signal by a factor of 100, generating a first divided signal having a frequency of 10 KHz. A second frequency divider 26 coupled to an output of the first frequency divider 24 divides the first divider signal by a factor of 2, generating a 5 KHz sampling signal.

The mouse data encoder 20 samples the mouse data at a frequency equal to the sampling signal and generates the mouse data as a time division multiplexed, or time series, digital signal to a mouse serial data voltage converter 28.

The transmitter circuitry 10 comprises a phase locked loop type FM transmitter comprising a phase locked loop oscillator 30. The phase locked loop oscillator 30 comprises a phase-comparator 32, a low pass filter 34, a voltage controlled oscillator 36 and a programmable counter 38. The programmable controller operates as a frequency divider, and the division factor is determined by a first switch 40.

A voltage controlled oscillator output signal f_o , generated by the voltage controlled oscillator 36 is input to the programmable counter 38 and utilized as a feedback signal. The programmable counter 38 divides the frequency of the voltage controlled oscillator output sig-

nal f_o . The output of the programmable counter 38 is coupled to the input of the phase-comparator 32. The phase locked loop oscillator 30 operates in a conventional manner and the programmable counter 38 controls the frequency of the voltage controlled oscillator output signal f_o . The programmable counter 38 is provided to vary the carrier frequency of the transmitted FM signal so that a plurality of mice can operate simultaneously at close positions without adversely affecting each other.

It is desired that the transmitting band width be approximately 10 to 20 KHz, the maximum transmitting output power be approximately 1 mW and the maximum usable range from the host computer 8 be approximately 5 meters. Further, a power source such as a chargeable battery (not shown) is preferably contained in the mouse 5.

A power source 43, for example a rechargeable battery, supplies d.c. power to all components of the transmitter circuitry 10. It is desired to provide power switch means 42, for example a touch sensor, for turning on the power source 43 only when the hand of an operator is contacted with the body of the mouse 5.

The mouse data is converted to an analog signal by the mouse serial data voltage converter 28 and is entered to the voltage controlled oscillator 36 as a control voltage. The mouse data is FM-modulated, amplified by a buffer amplifier 41 and transmitted via a transmitting antenna 13. The transmitting antenna 13 is preferably an internal type located within the body of the mouse 5.

Referring now to FIG. 2, illustrated generally is a block diagram of the receiver 12 which is coupled to the host computer 5 (FIG. 4). As indicated above, the receiver 12 comprises the receiving antenna 11, a high frequency amplifier 44, a frequency converter 46, an intermediate frequency amplifier 48, and a demodulator 50.

A phase locked loop circuit 52, comprising a second phase comparator 54, a second low pass filter 56, a second voltage controller oscillator 58, a second programmable counter 60 and a second switch 62 is operated in a similar fashion to the first phase locked loop circuit 30 described above in conjunction with FIG. 1 and the transmitter circuitry 10. Thus for reception of the radio wave signal R transmitted by the mouse 9, the receiver 12 is tuned to the same carrier frequency as the radio wave signal R. Hence the first programmable counter 38 and the second programmable counter 60 are set to the same value.

The receiver 12 receives the time series analog signal transmitted by the mouse 9 and the demodulator 50 demodulates the signal. The mouse data decoder 64 receives the demodulated analog mouse data signal and demultiplexes and digitizes same. Outputs of the mouse data decoder 64 are coupled to input ports of the host computer 5, which receives the digital mouse data.

A mouse level meter 66 indicates the signal strength of the received radio wave signal R.

Referring now to FIG. 5, illustrated is a front panel of the receiver 12. The mouse level meter 66, as indicated above, displays signal strength of the radio wave signal R. A channel display 68 indicates the frequency at which the receiver 12 is currently tuned.

It is desired to provide an interface for enabling the application of the present invention to computers of any architecture. It is possible to associate the receiver 12 in the body of the host computer 5.

In the embodiment described above, FM modulation has been described. However, the present invention is not limited to FM modulation, rather other modulation formats such as phase modulation or pulse width modulation may be employed. Further a radio wave mouse apparatus may have individual channels for each of the signals comprising the mouse data rather than multiplexing the signals.

According to the present invention as described above, the radio wave mouse apparatus is improved in operability, thereby remarkably improving the operating efficiency of a personal computer.

I claim:

1. In a computer system comprising a computer having a keyboard and a display device connected to the computer, an improved position indicator means comprising:

a mouse having means responsive to movement thereof over a support surface for generating electrical signals indicating the position of the mouse; power source means carried by the mouse; circuit means, including a selectable frequency-setting means, carried by the mouse and powered by said power source means for generating frequency modulated radio signals corresponding to said electrical signals;

an antenna within said mouse for transmitting said generated radio signals; and

processing means associated with said computer for receiving the transmitted radio signal and converting said radio signal into a display on said display device, said power source, circuit means, and antenna being cooperatively arranged to provide a transmitting output sufficient to effectively transmit said signals to said processing means to cause said display to be accurately positioned on said display device corresponding to the positioning of said mouse notwithstanding changes in the directional positioning and noncontinuity in the line-of-sight path between said antenna and the processing means.

2. The computer system of claim 1 wherein said display comprises a cursor.

3. The computer system of claim 1 wherein said means for generating said radio signal includes switch means.

4. The computer system of claim 1 wherein said circuit means are associated with said power source means

for selectively connecting the power source means to said circuit means.

5. The computer system of claim 1 wherein said circuit means includes means for selectively causing the carrier frequency of said radio signals to be any one of a plurality of different frequencies.

6. The computer system of claim 1 wherein said circuit means includes manually operable means for selectively causing the carrier frequency of said radio signals to be any one of a plurality of different frequencies.

7. The computer system of claim 1 wherein said circuit means includes means for selectively causing the carrier frequency of said radio signals to be any one of a plurality of different frequencies and said processing means includes means for selectively processing any one of said plurality of different frequencies.

8. The computer system of claim 1 wherein said circuit means includes means for selectively causing the carrier frequency of said radio signals to be any one of a plurality of different preselected frequencies.

9. The computer system of claim 1 wherein said circuit means includes a switch carried by the mouse and said frequency modulated radio wave signals correspond to said electric signals and the arrangement of said switch.

10. The apparatus of claim 1 further comprising: data encoding means for sampling said electrical signals to provide a time series digital signal; and a digital-to-analog converter for converting said digital signal into an analog voltage for use in generating said modulated radio wave signals, said radio transmitting means having a voltage controlled oscillator using the converted analog voltage as the control voltage therefor.

11. The apparatus of claim 10 wherein said FM transmitter comprises a variable frequency transmitter and said radio transmitting means includes a selection switch arranged to be selectively set to a desired transmitting frequency.

12. The apparatus of claim 1 further comprising power source switch means for connecting the radio signal transmitting means to the power source means only when the hand of an operator is juxtaposed to the mouse.

13. The apparatus of claim 9 further comprising interface means connected to said receiving means for providing any one of a plurality of different forms of the converted radio signal for selective use by computers having different preselected corresponding architectures.

* * * * *



US005960085A

United States Patent [19]

de la Huerga

[11] Patent Number: 5,960,085
[45] Date of Patent: Sep. 28, 1999

[54] SECURITY BADGE FOR AUTOMATED ACCESS CONTROL AND SECURE DATA GATHERING

[76] Inventor: Carlos de la Huerga, 9190 N. Upper River Rd., River Hills, Wis. 53217

[21] Appl. No.: 08/834,634

[22] Filed: Apr. 14, 1997

[51] Int. Cl.⁶ H04L 9/32; H04L 9/00; H04L 9/30

[52] U.S. Cl. 380/25; 380/4; 380/9; 380/23; 380/30; 380/49; 340/825.31; 340/825.34; 340/825.54; 395/186; 395/187.01; 395/188.01; 235/380; 235/382

[58] Field of Search 380/4, 9, 23, 24, 380/25, 49, 50, 59, 30; 235/379, 380, 382; 395/186, 187.01, 188.01; 340/825.31, 825.34, 825.54; 342/42, 44

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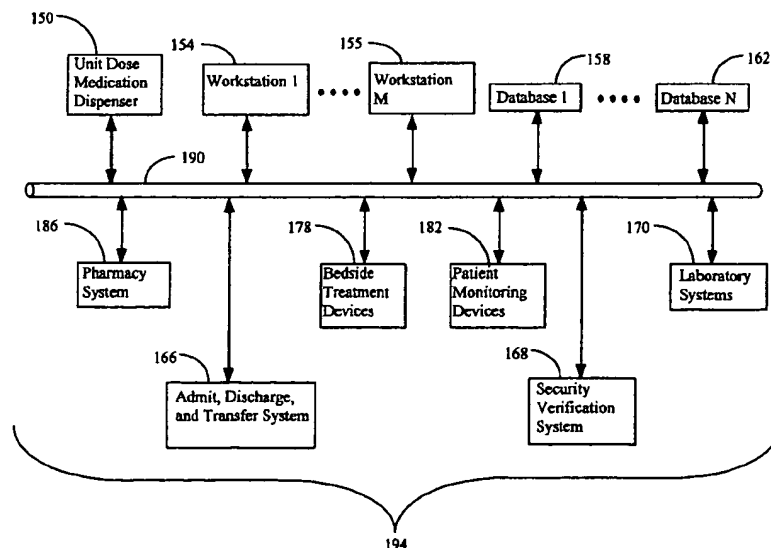
2154344 9/1985 United Kingdom 380/25

Primary Examiner—Bernarr E. Gregory
Attorney, Agent, or Firm—Akin, Gump, Strauss, Hauer & Feld, L.L.P.

[57] ABSTRACT

A system utilizing a personal identification badge to collect data and to provide access to a computer terminal. The personal identification badge includes circuitry and transmitter components for transmitting identification information and exchanging other digital information with a computer terminal and other compatible devices. The personal identification badge establishes a wireless communication link with a computer terminal to allow a user to logon to the terminal. When a user leaves the computer terminal, the communication link is terminated, causing the computer terminal to lock the keyboard, blank the monitor, and/or logoff the user if the communication link is not restored within a sufficient time period. The personal identification badge includes means for encrypting and signing digital information. Adapted for use within a hospital, the system provides further means for establishing an affiliation between a personal identification badge and a patient, for collecting digital information from electronic devices that record or gather data regarding the status of a patient, for digitizing and recording dictation spoken into the personal identification badge, and for modifying the digital information so collected to conform to standards, such as those of a Java applet or the hypertext markup language, for interactive display on a universal display browser.

32 Claims, 26 Drawing Sheets



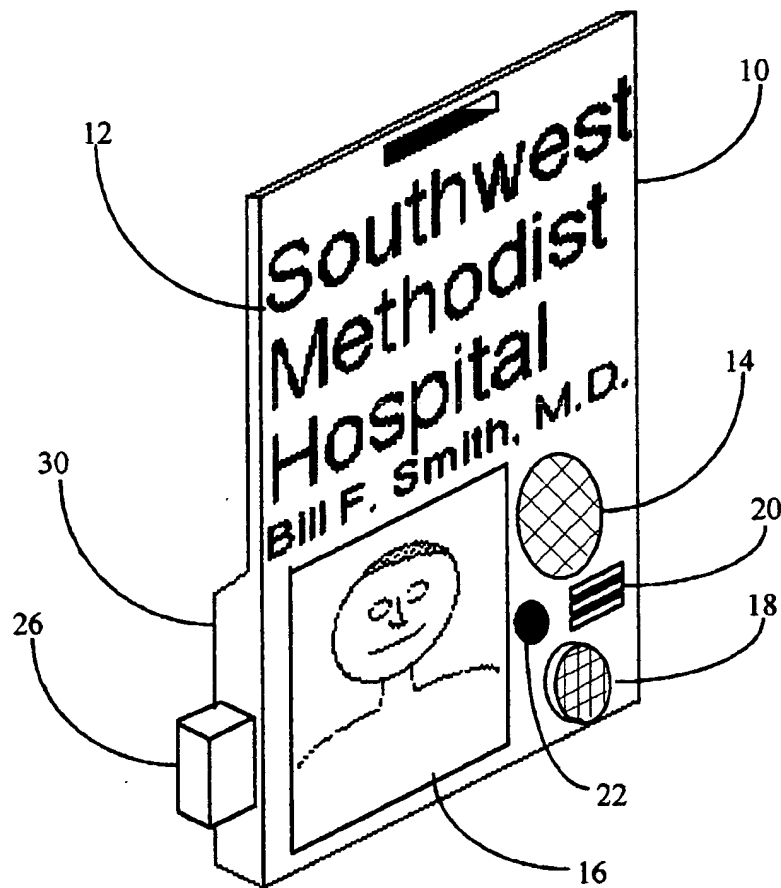


Figure 1

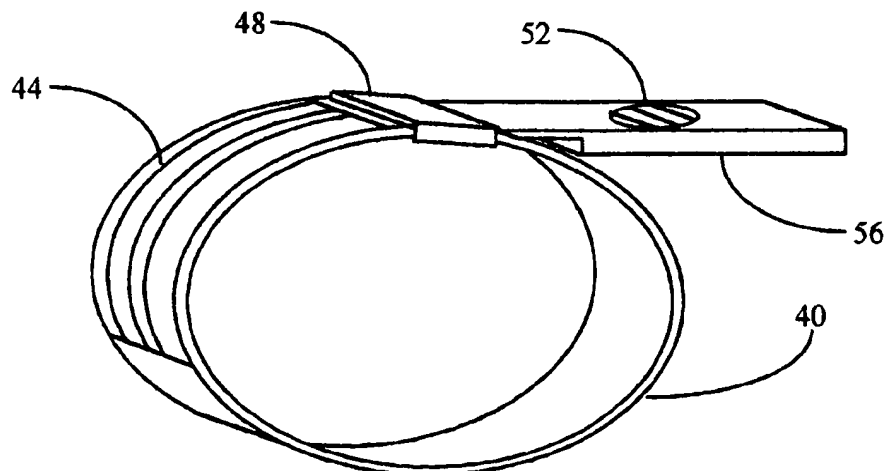


Figure 2

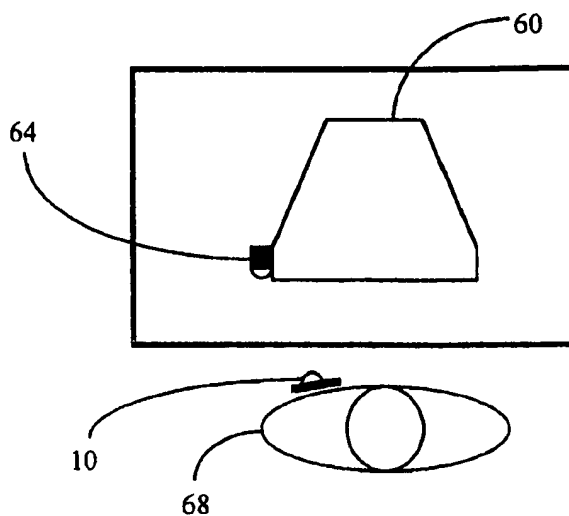


Figure 3

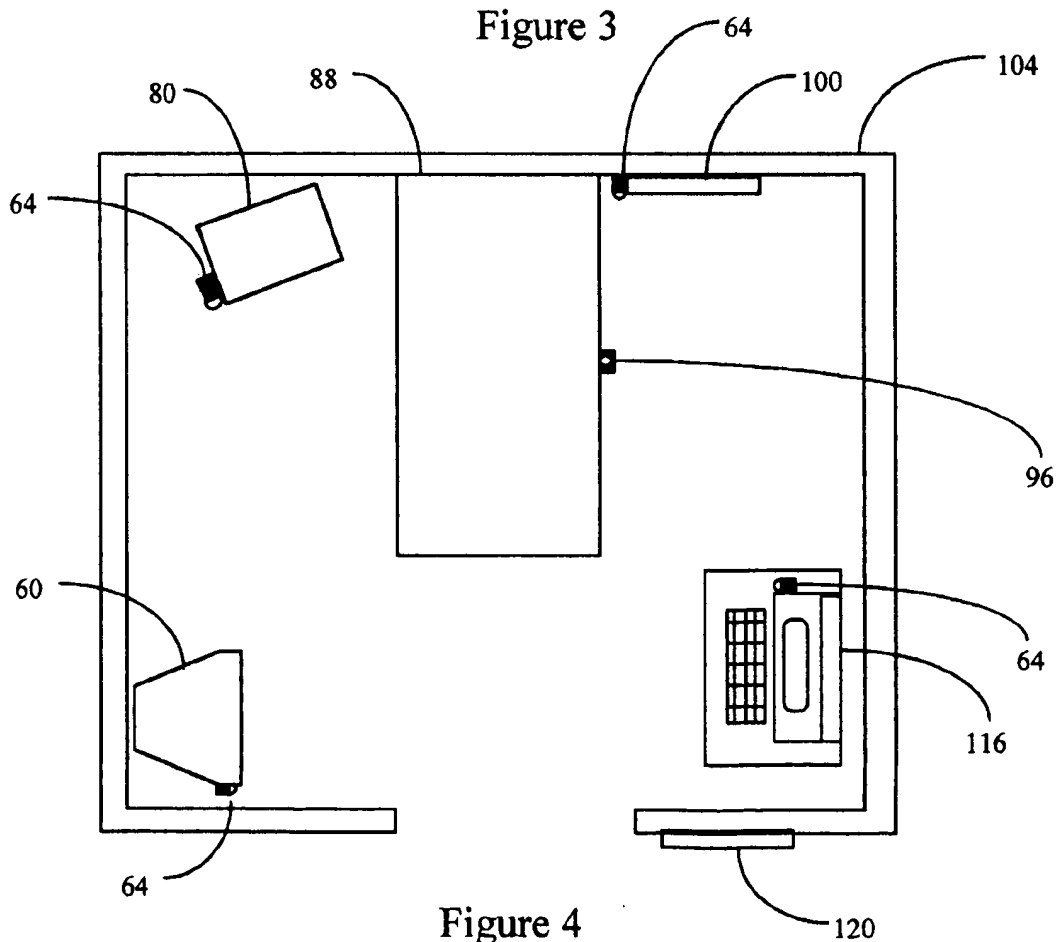


Figure 4

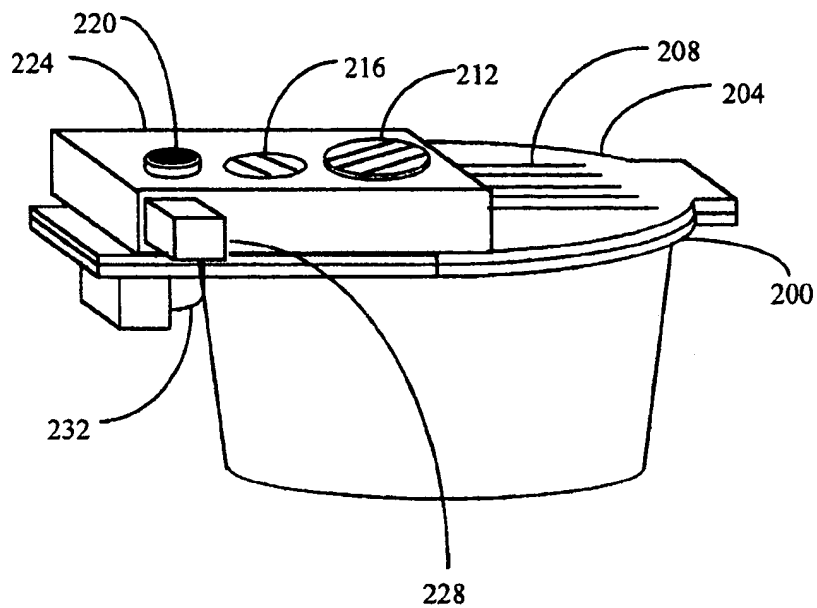


Figure 5

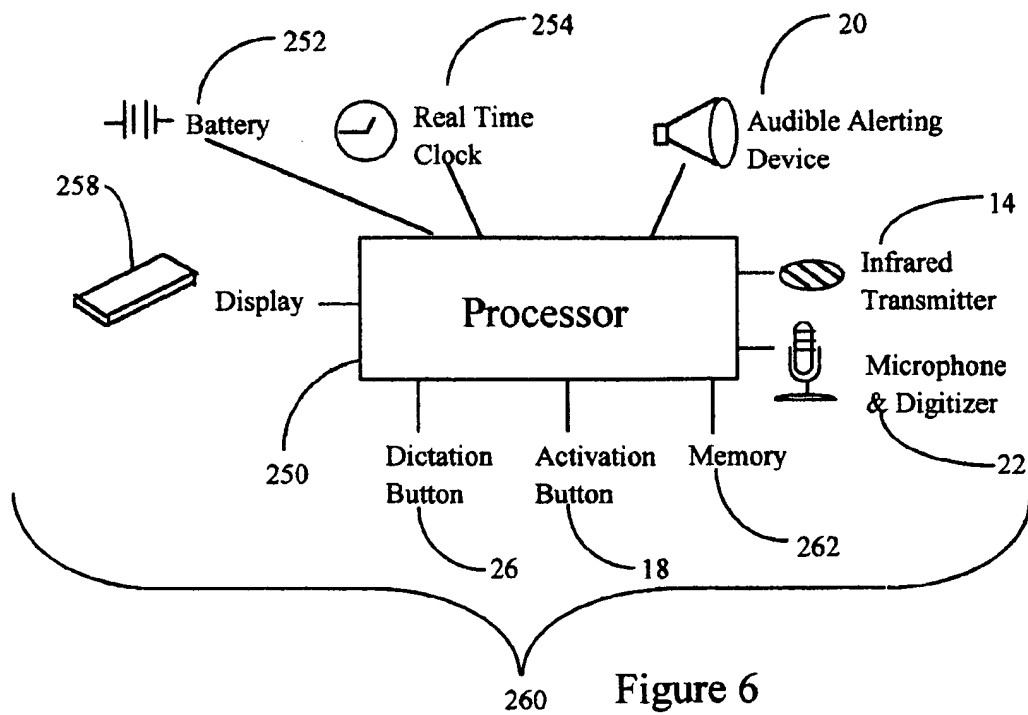


Figure 6

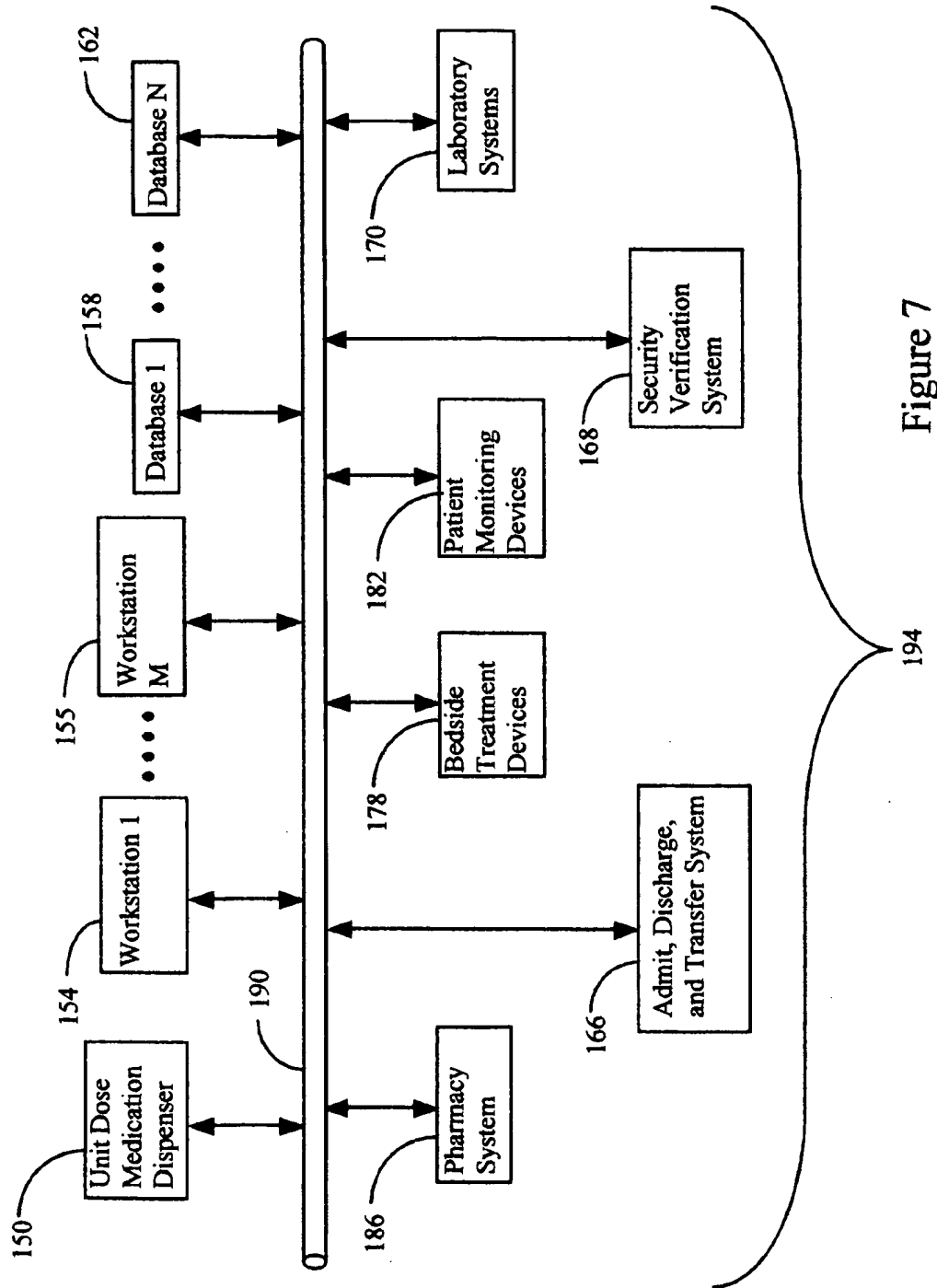


Figure 7

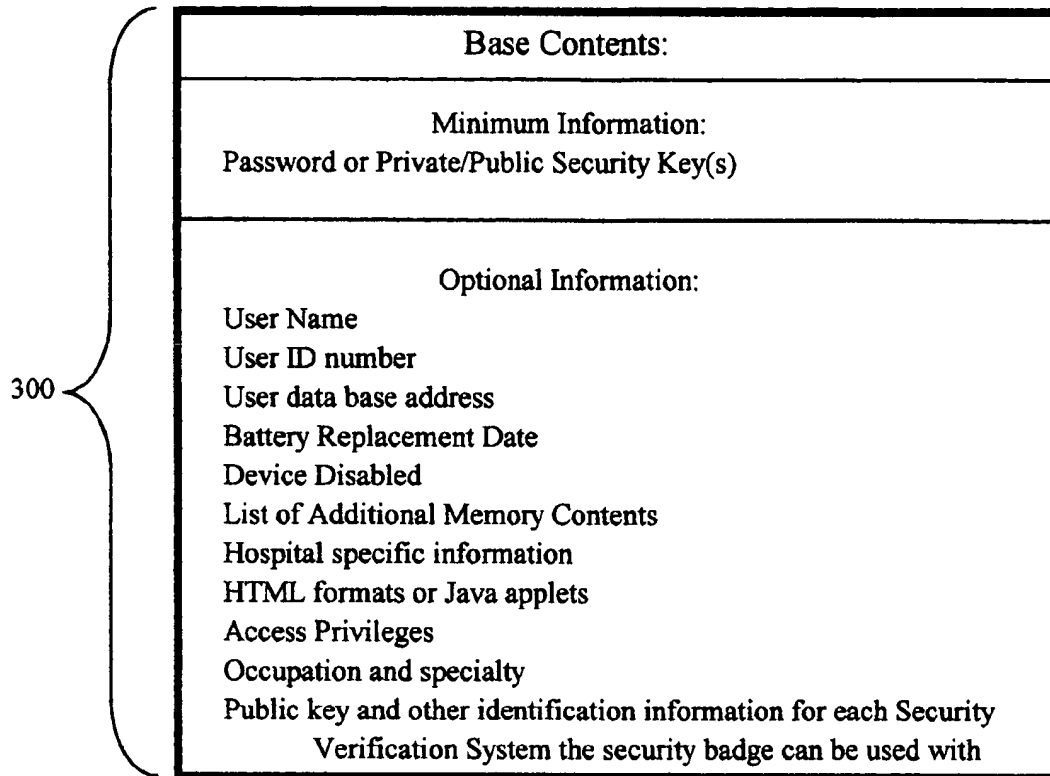


Figure 8

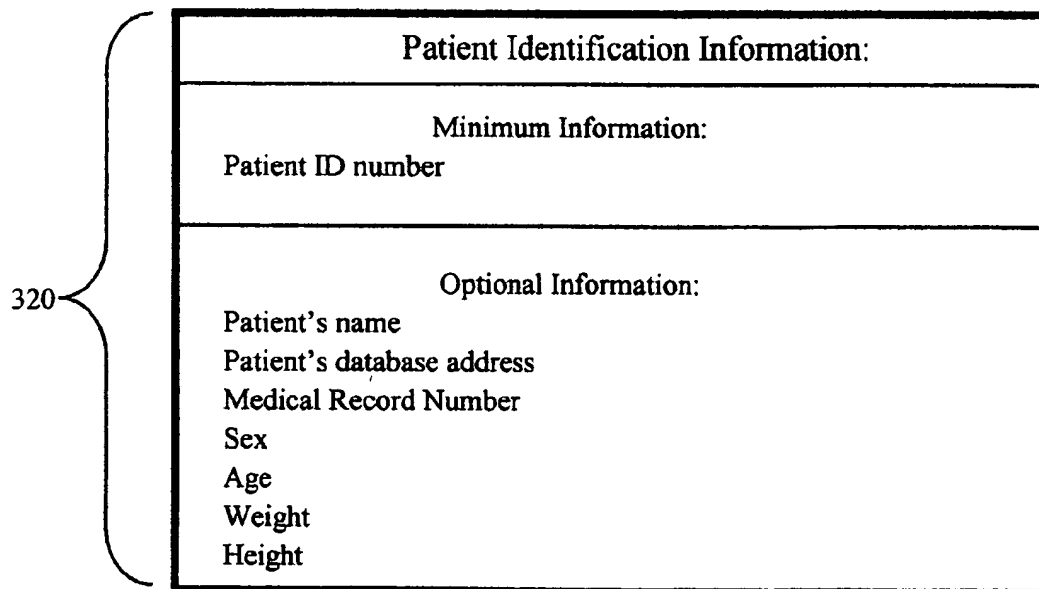


Figure 9

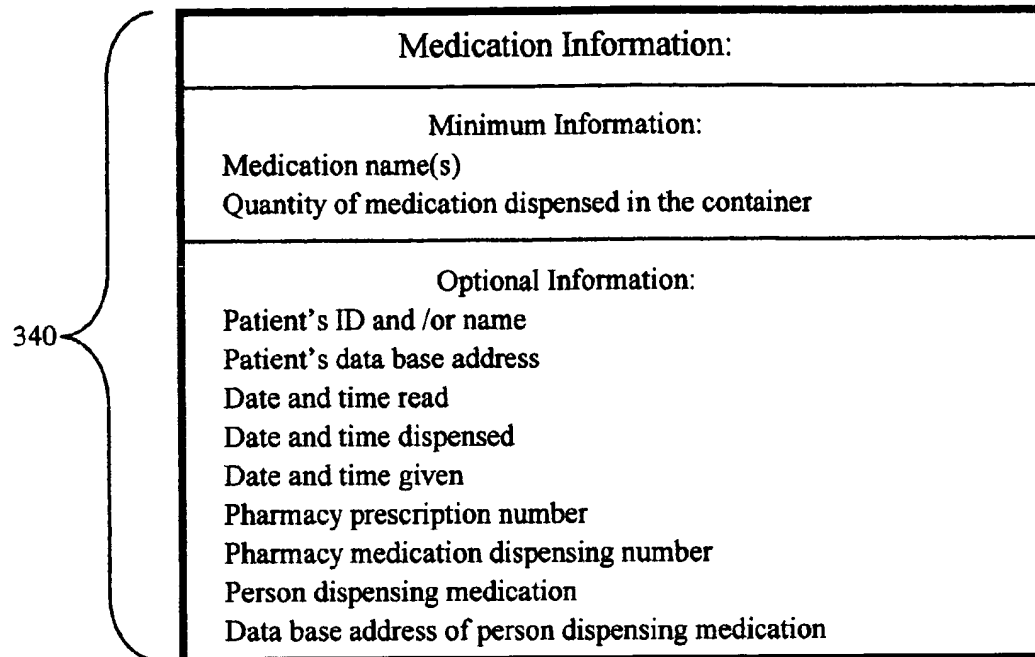


Figure 10

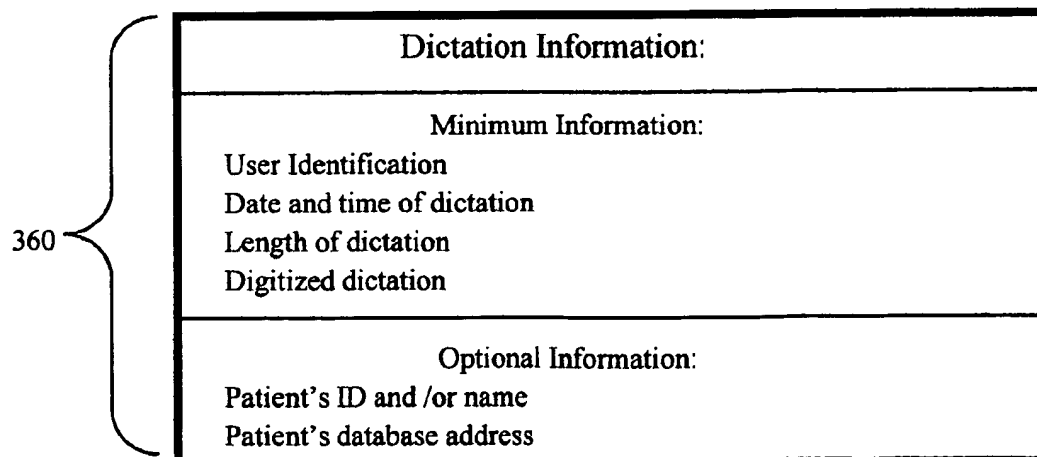


Figure 11

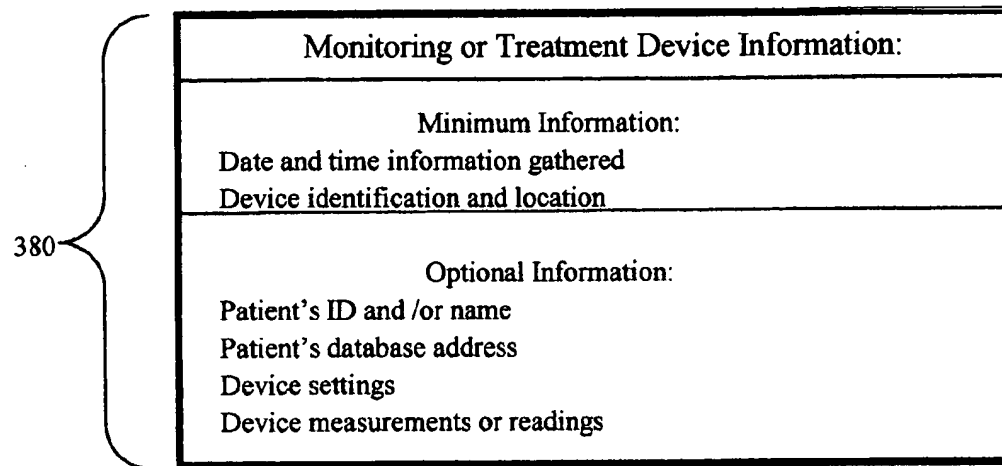


Figure 12

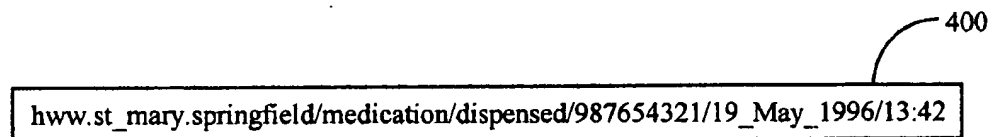


Figure 13A

404

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Date: 13:42 19-May-1996<br>
Report type: Medication Dispensing
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<tr><td colspan=3 align=center>Medication Given:</td></tr>
<tr><td>Penicillin</td><td>100mg</td><td>2 capsules</td></tr>
<tr><td>Tylenol w/Codeine</td><td>200mg</td><td>1 capsule</td></tr>
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Sam W. Johnston, R.N.</a>, at: 13:42 19-May-1996<br>
<br>
ID Device Serial Number: 1265338<br>
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Figure 13B

416 412

ID: 987654321
Date 13:59 19_May-1996
Report Type: Medication Administration

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Tylenol w/Codeine	200mg	1 capsule

420

Dispensed by: Sam W. Johnston, R.N., at: 13:42 19-May-1996
ID Device Serial Number: 1265338

Figure 13C

440

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460 <select name=Tylenol_w/Codeine>
      <option>1
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Figure 14A

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 <input type=submit value=Approve&#inforation>
 476 </html>

Figure 14A

444 480

ID: 987654321
 Report Type: Medication Administration
 Patient ID Verified: YES

448 492 496

Medication Given:			
Penicillin	100mg	2	capsules
Tylenol w/Codeine	200mg	1	capsule

464 468

Given by: Mary T. Adamson, R.N., at: 13:49 19-May-1996
 Dispensed by: Sam W. Johnston, R.N., at: 13:42 19-May-1996

ID Device Serial Number: 1265338

476 [Approve Information]

Figure 14B

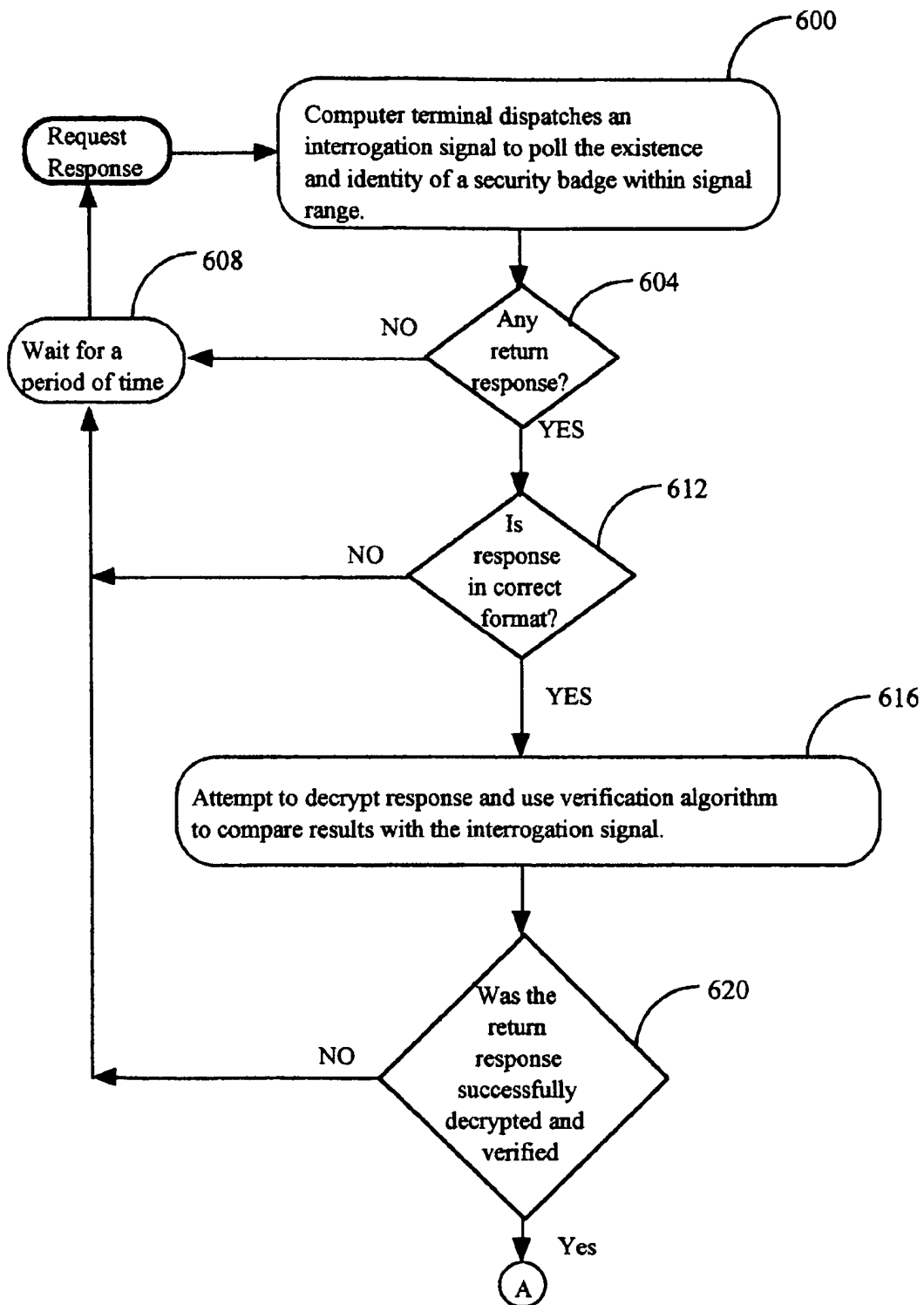


Figure 15A

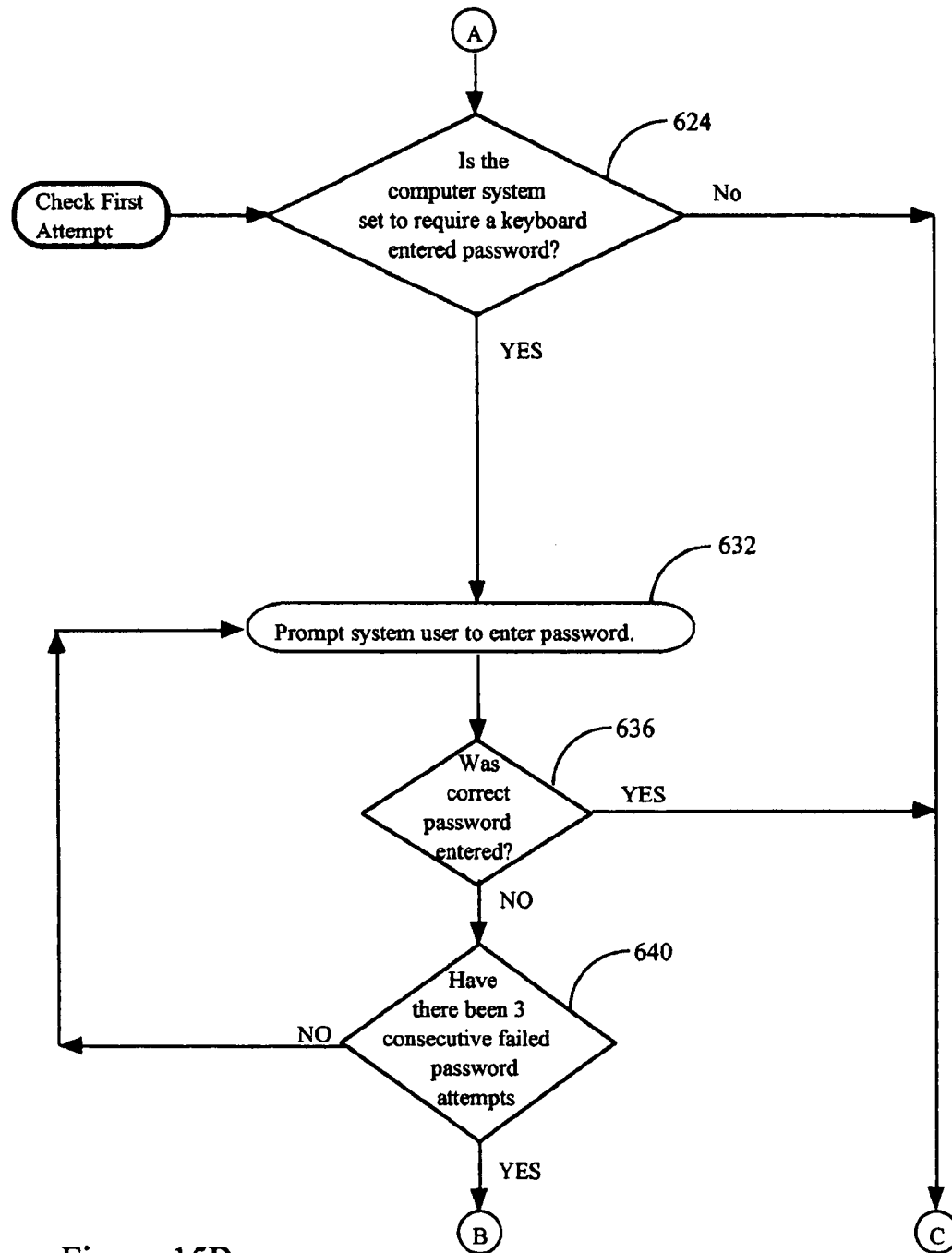


Figure 15B

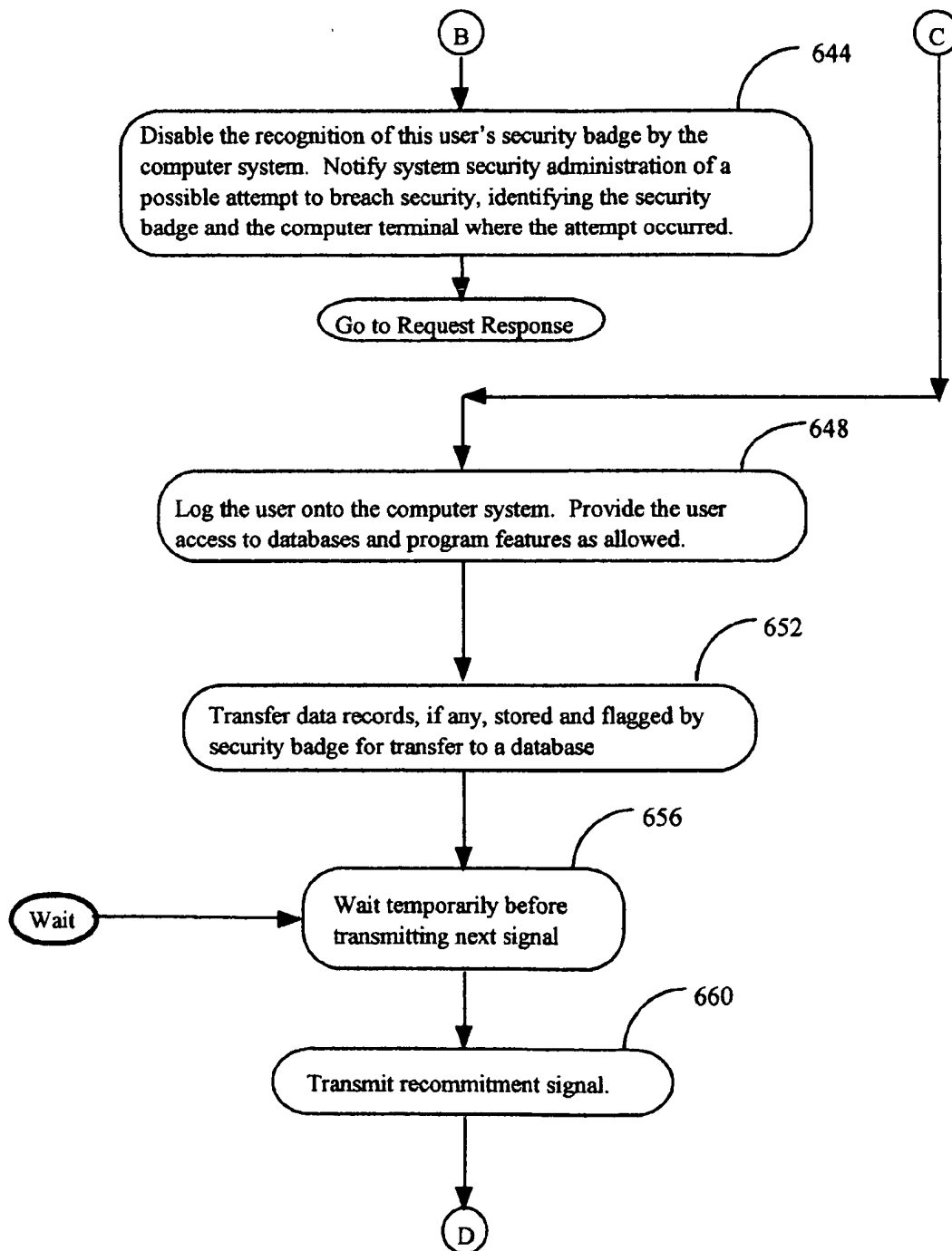


Figure 15C

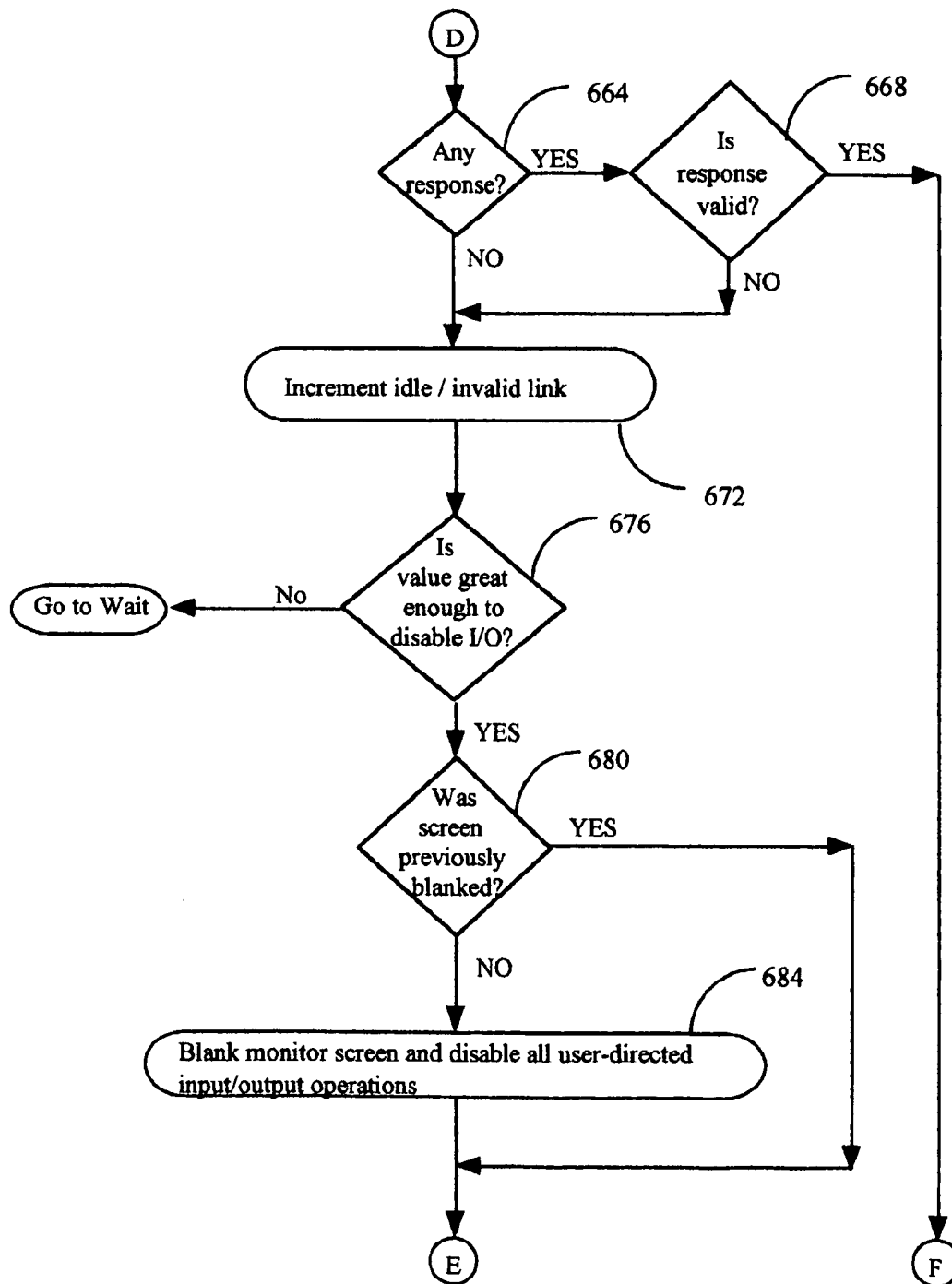


Figure 15D

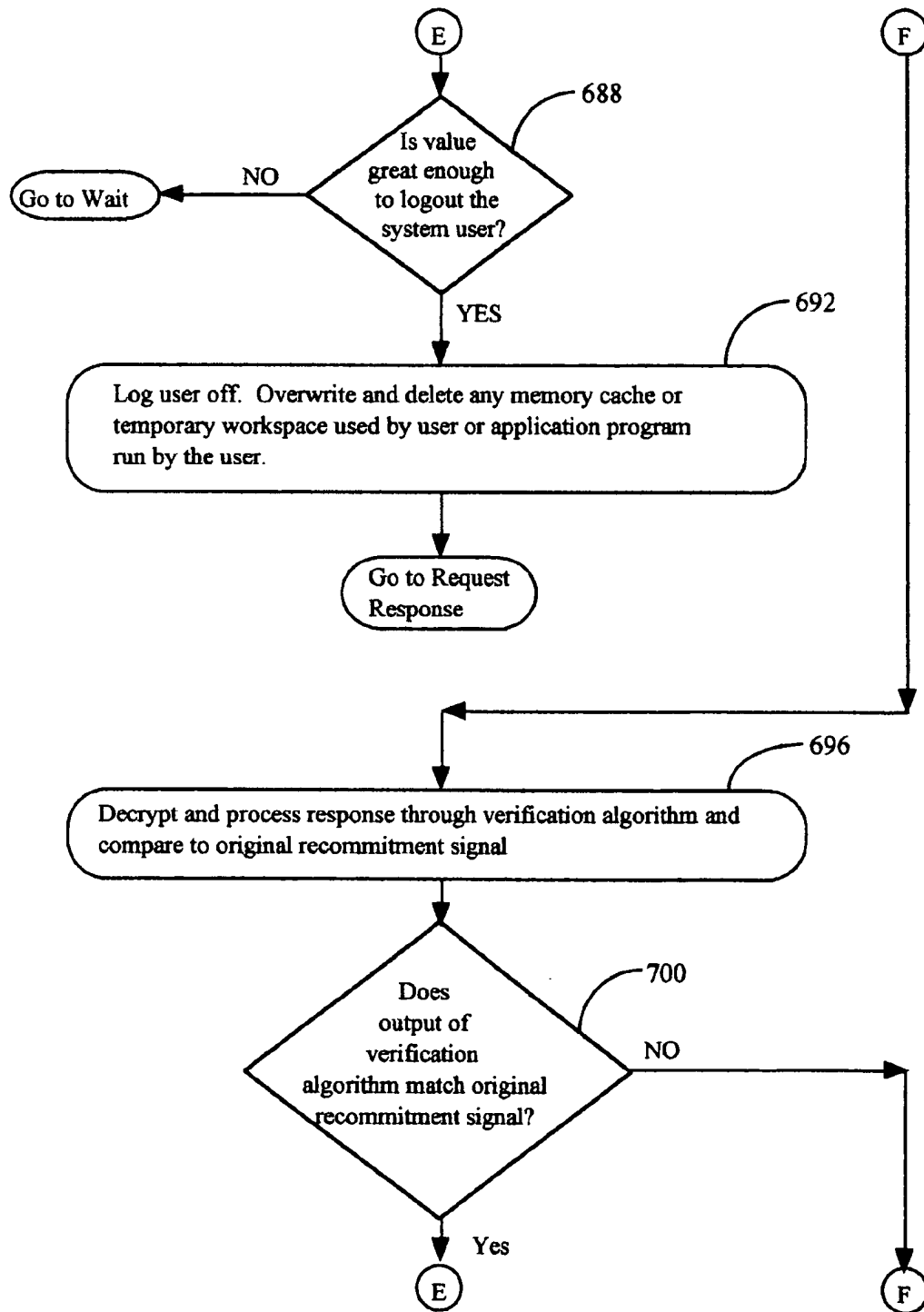


Figure 15E

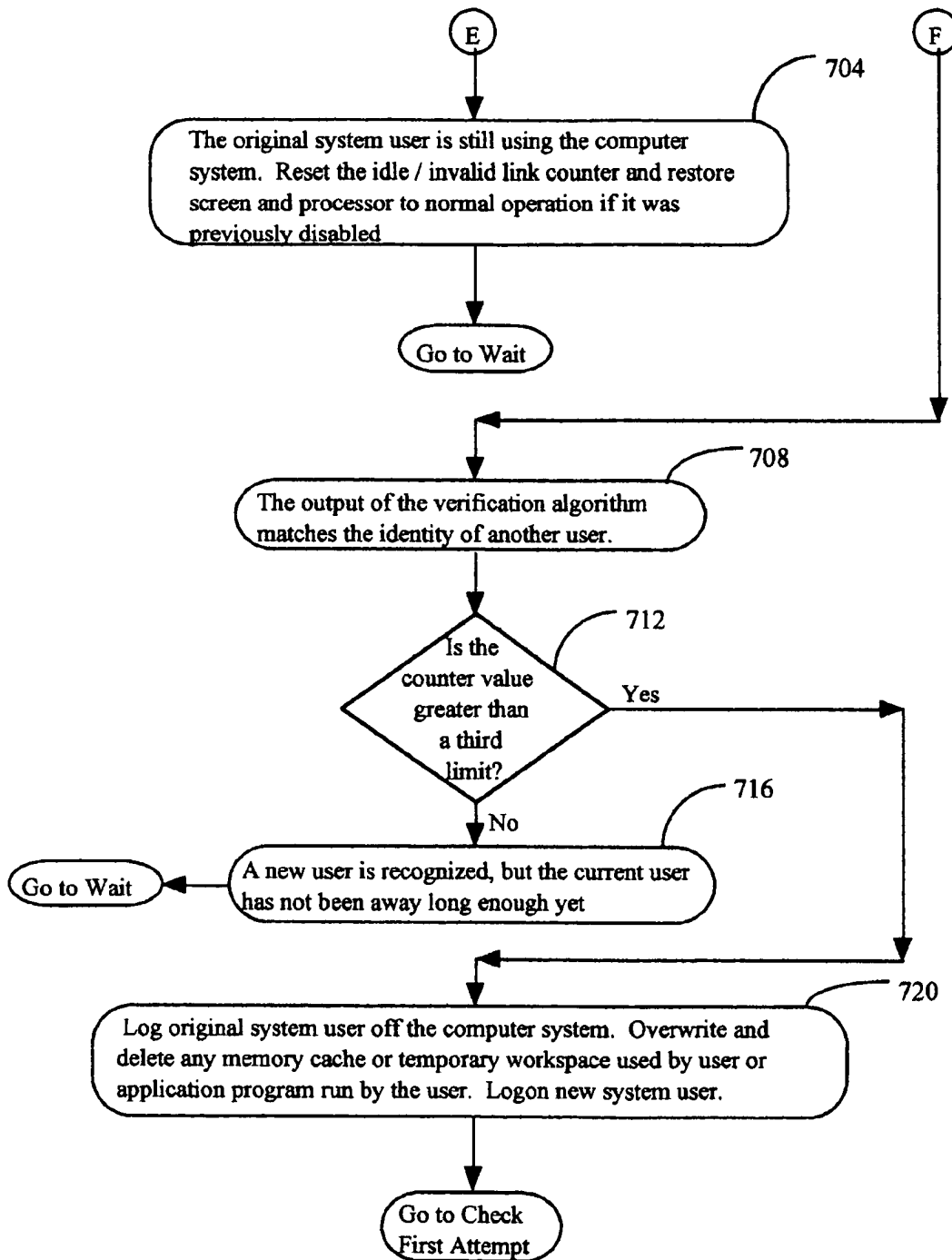


Figure 15F

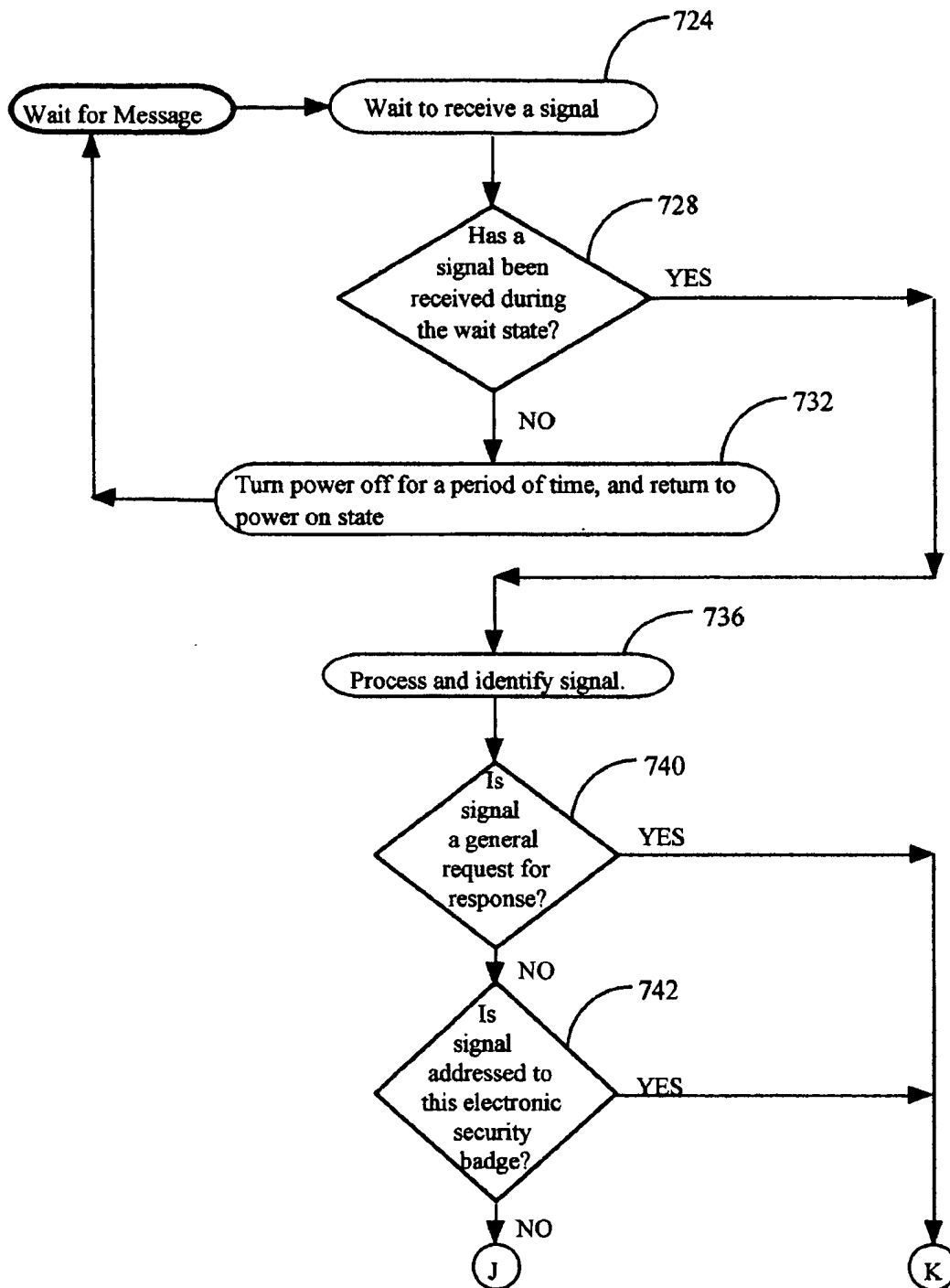


Figure 16A

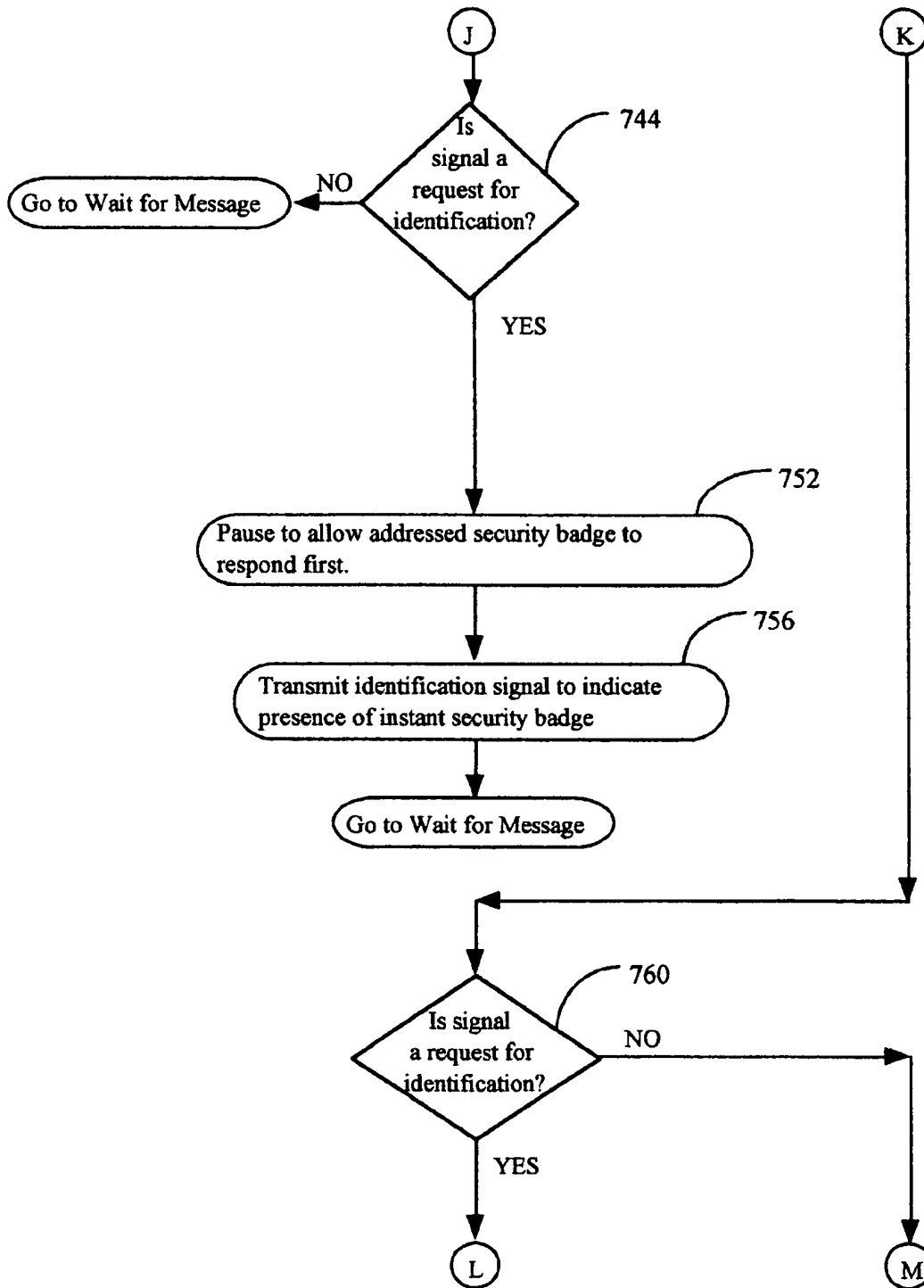


Figure 16B

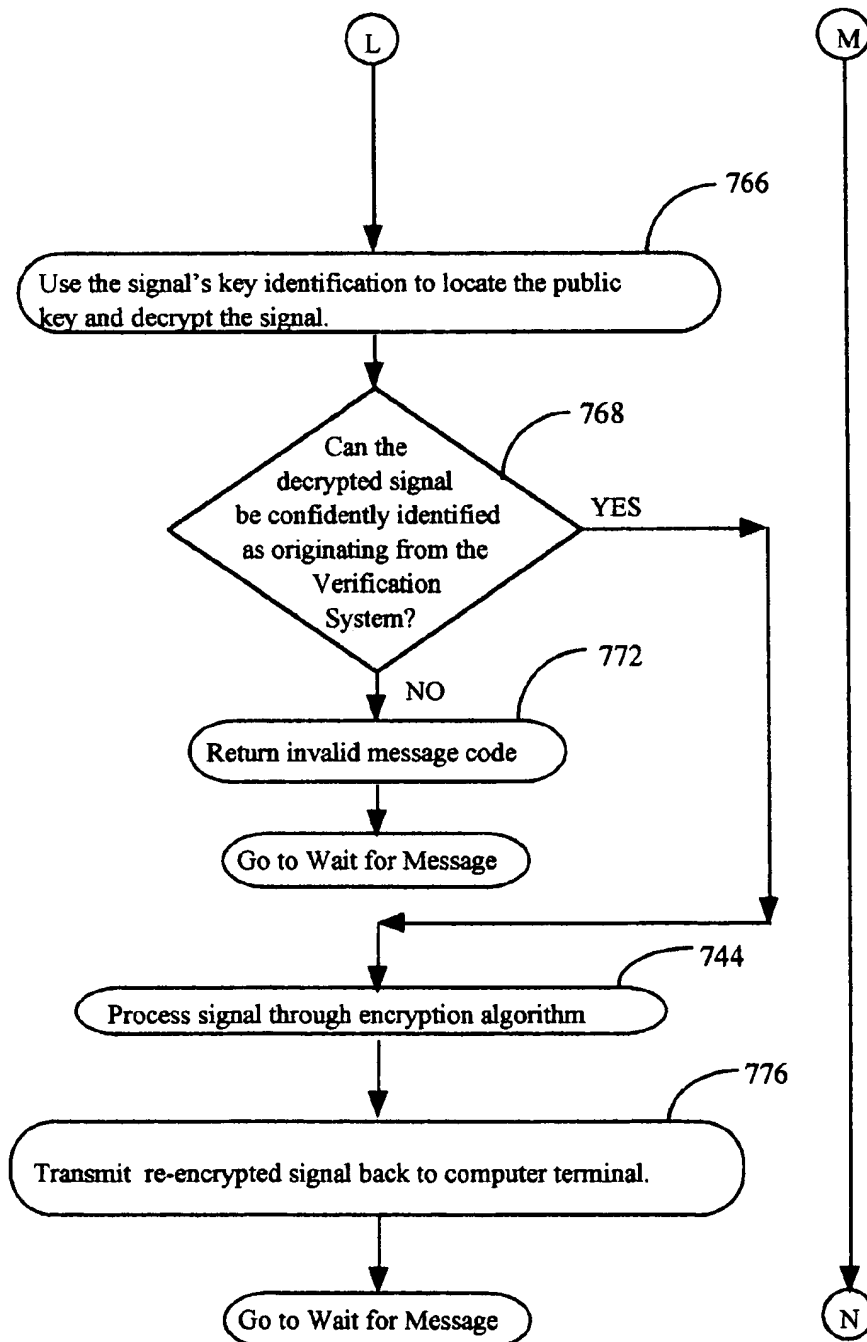


Figure 16C

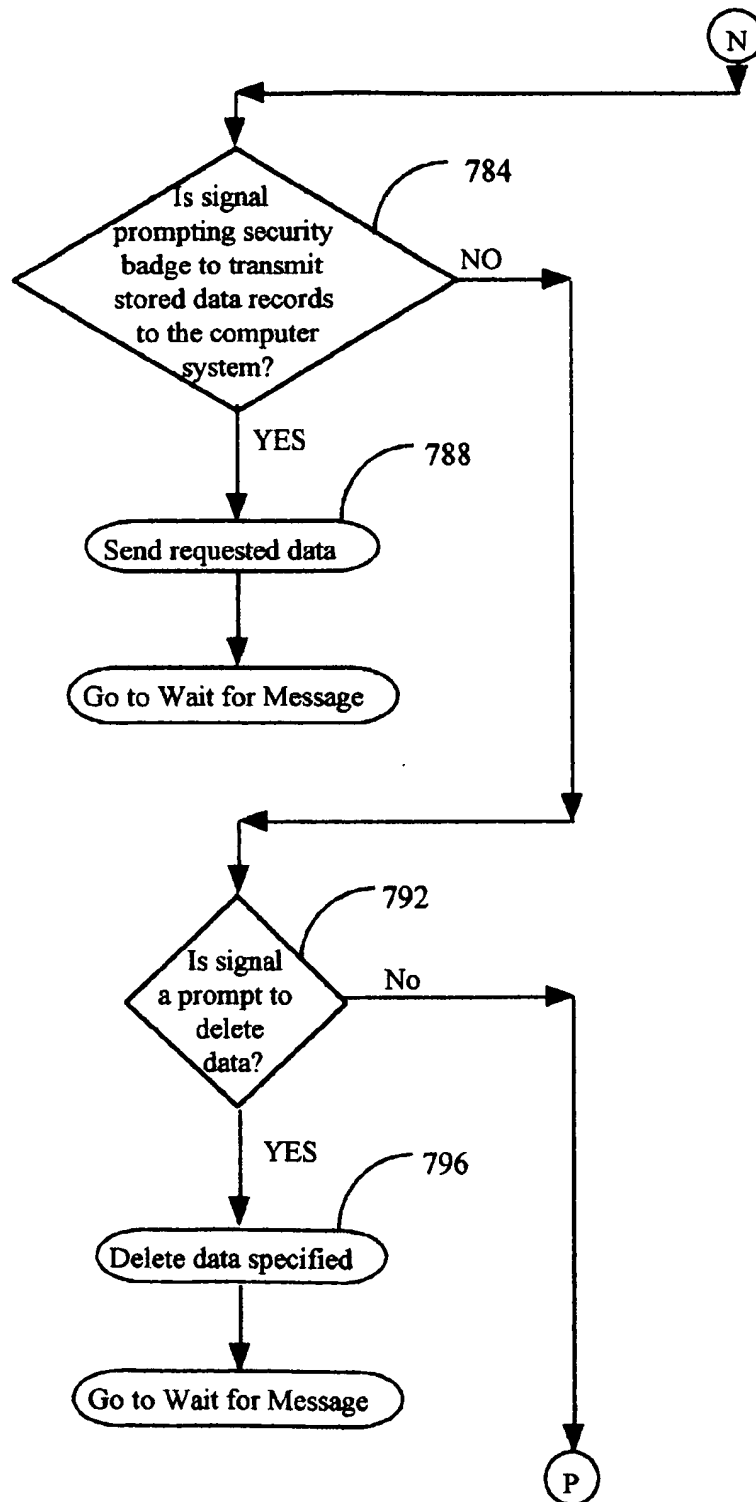


Figure 16D

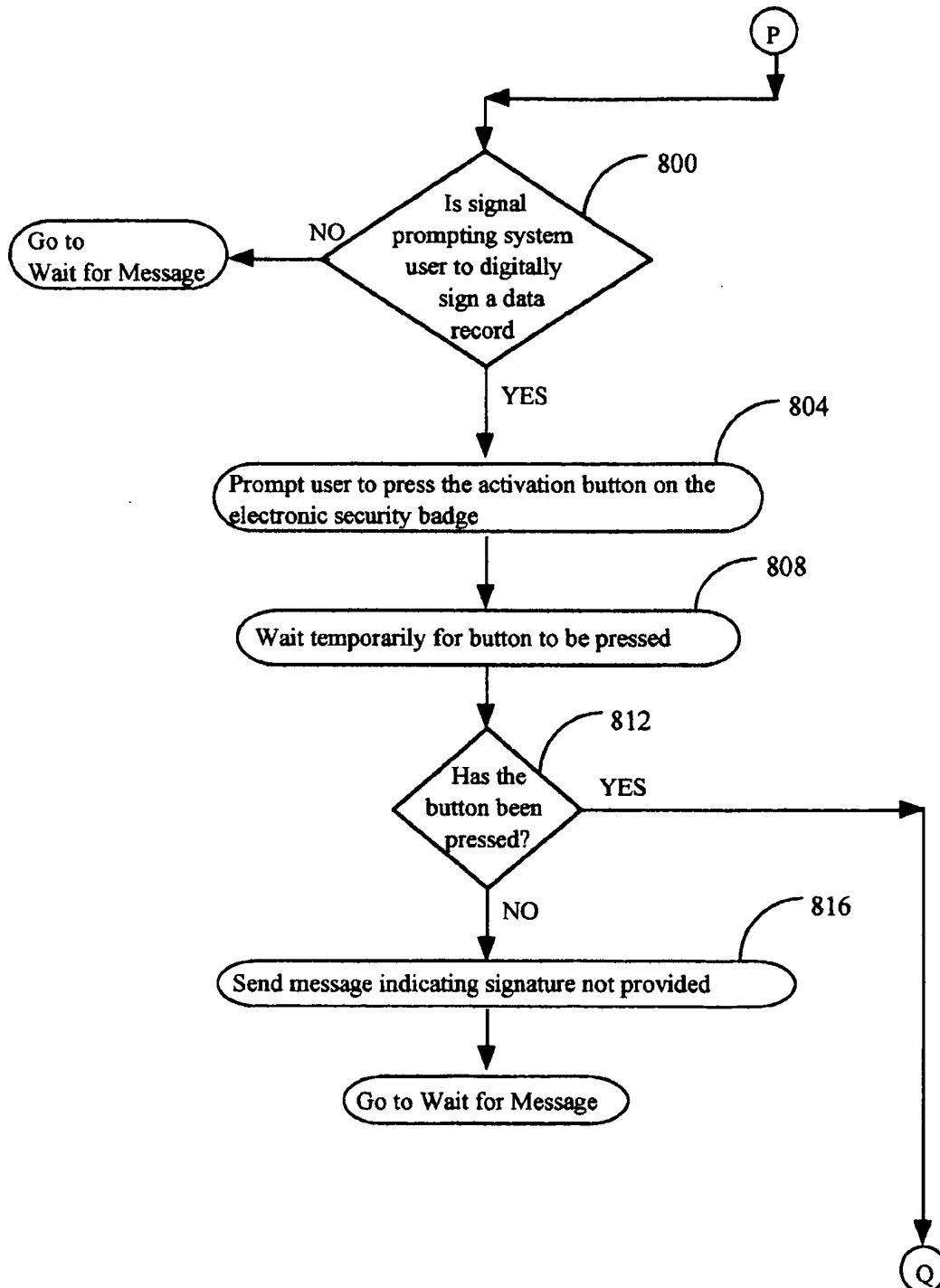


Figure 16E

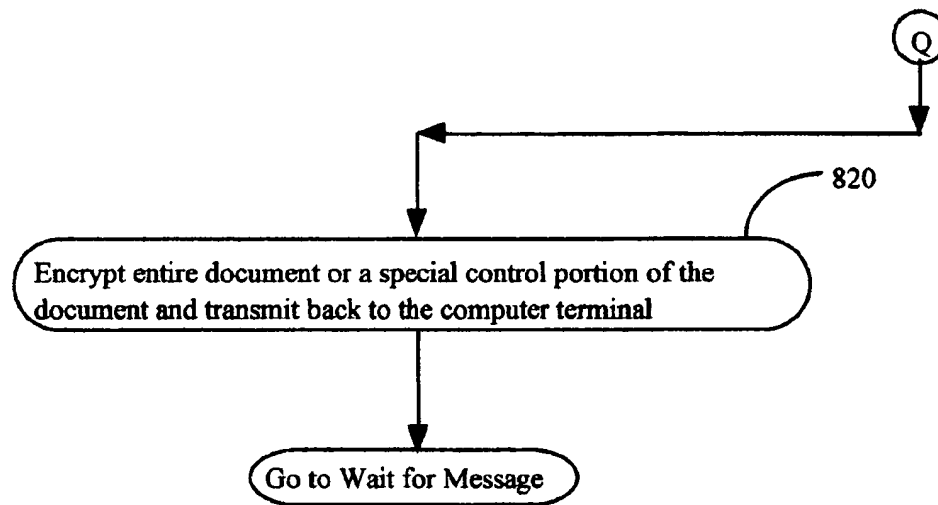


Figure 16F

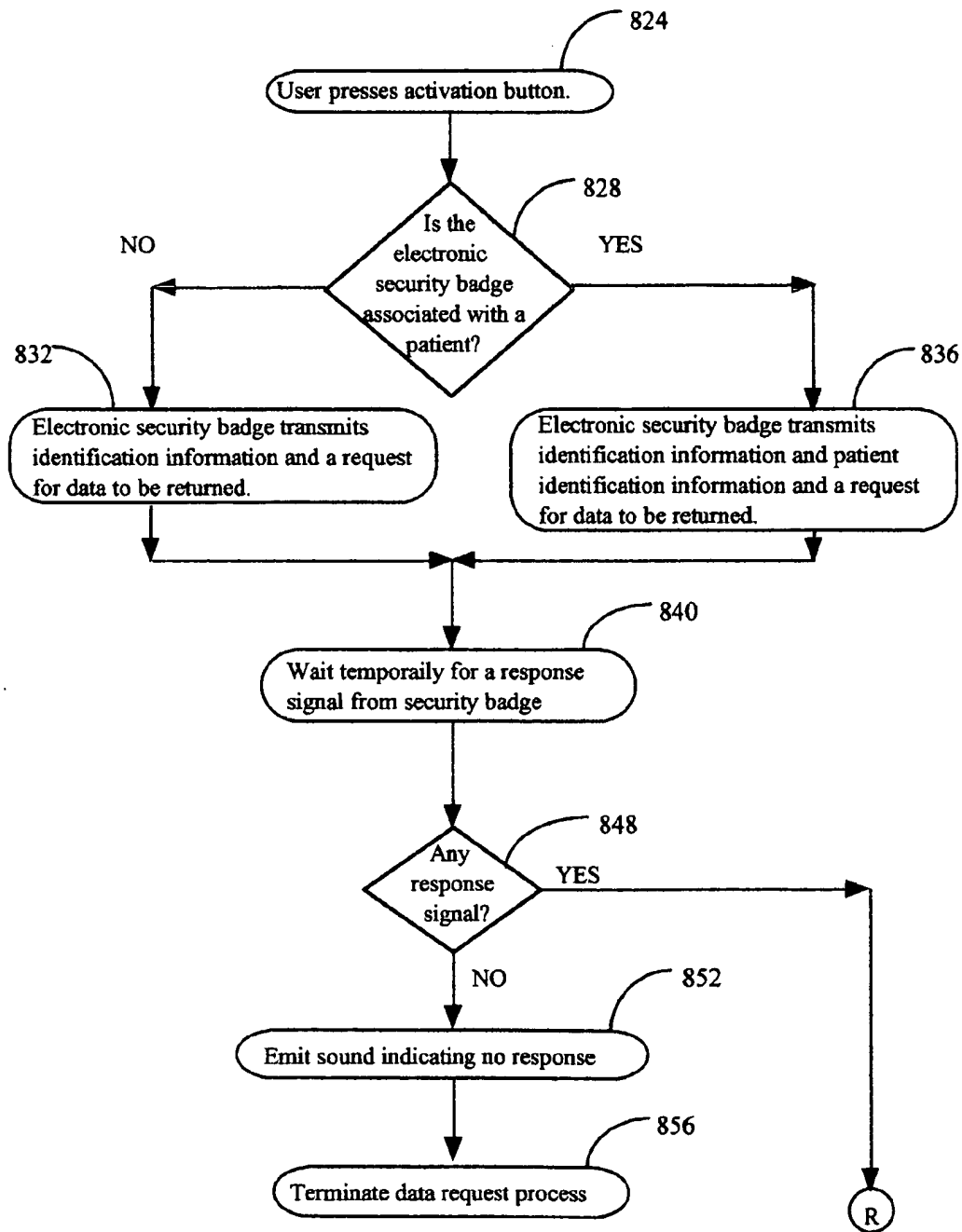


Figure 17A

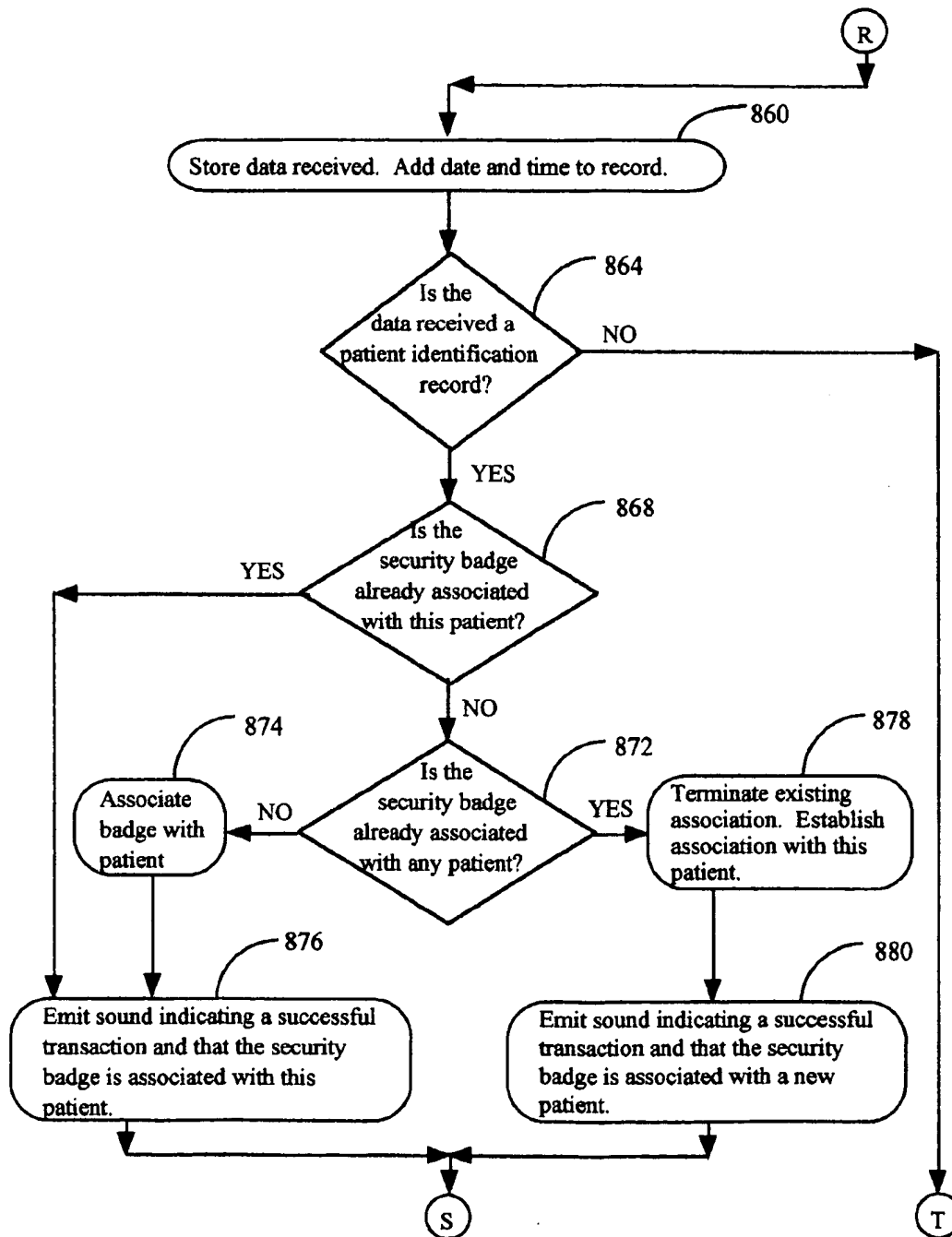


Figure 17B

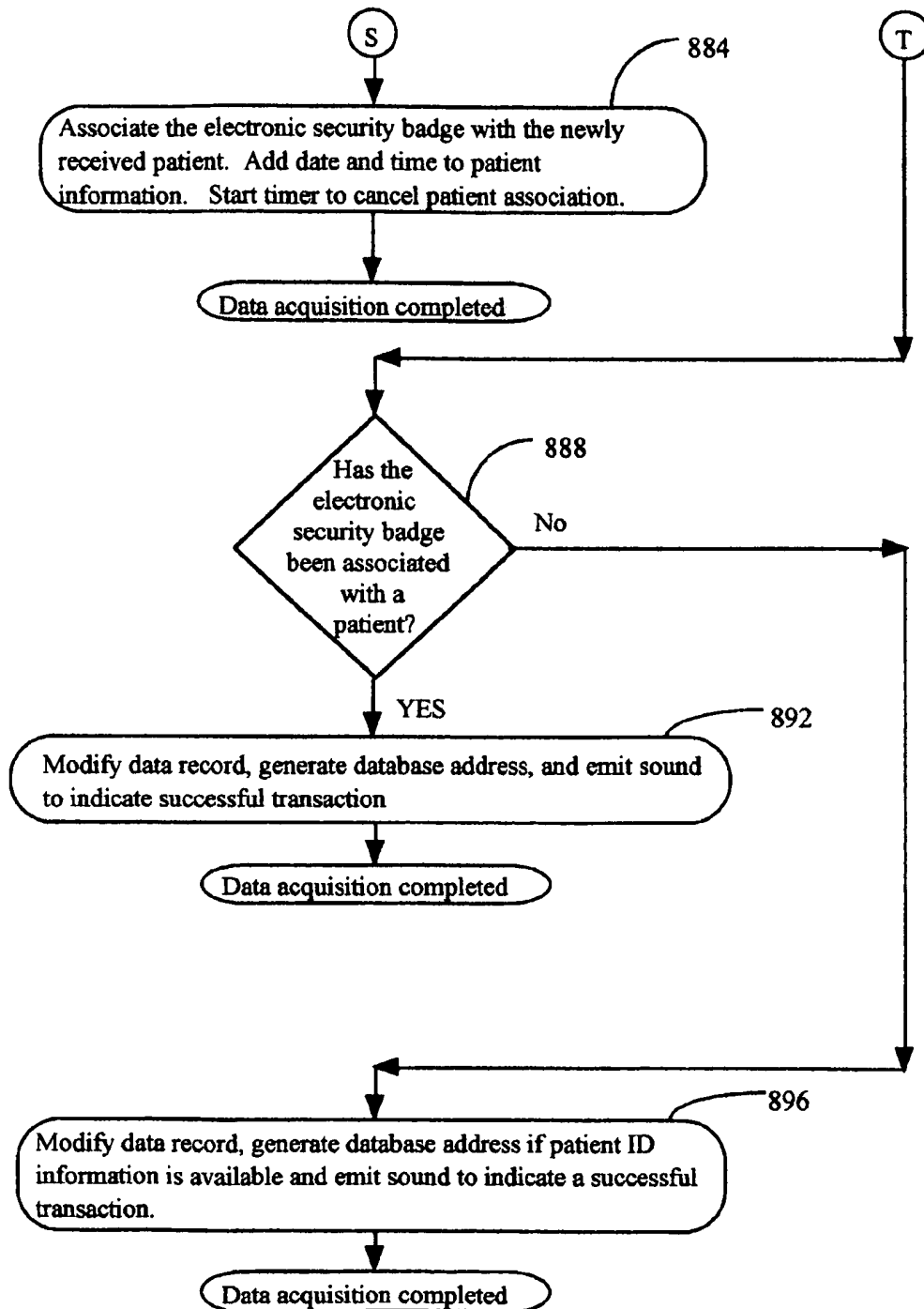


Figure 17C

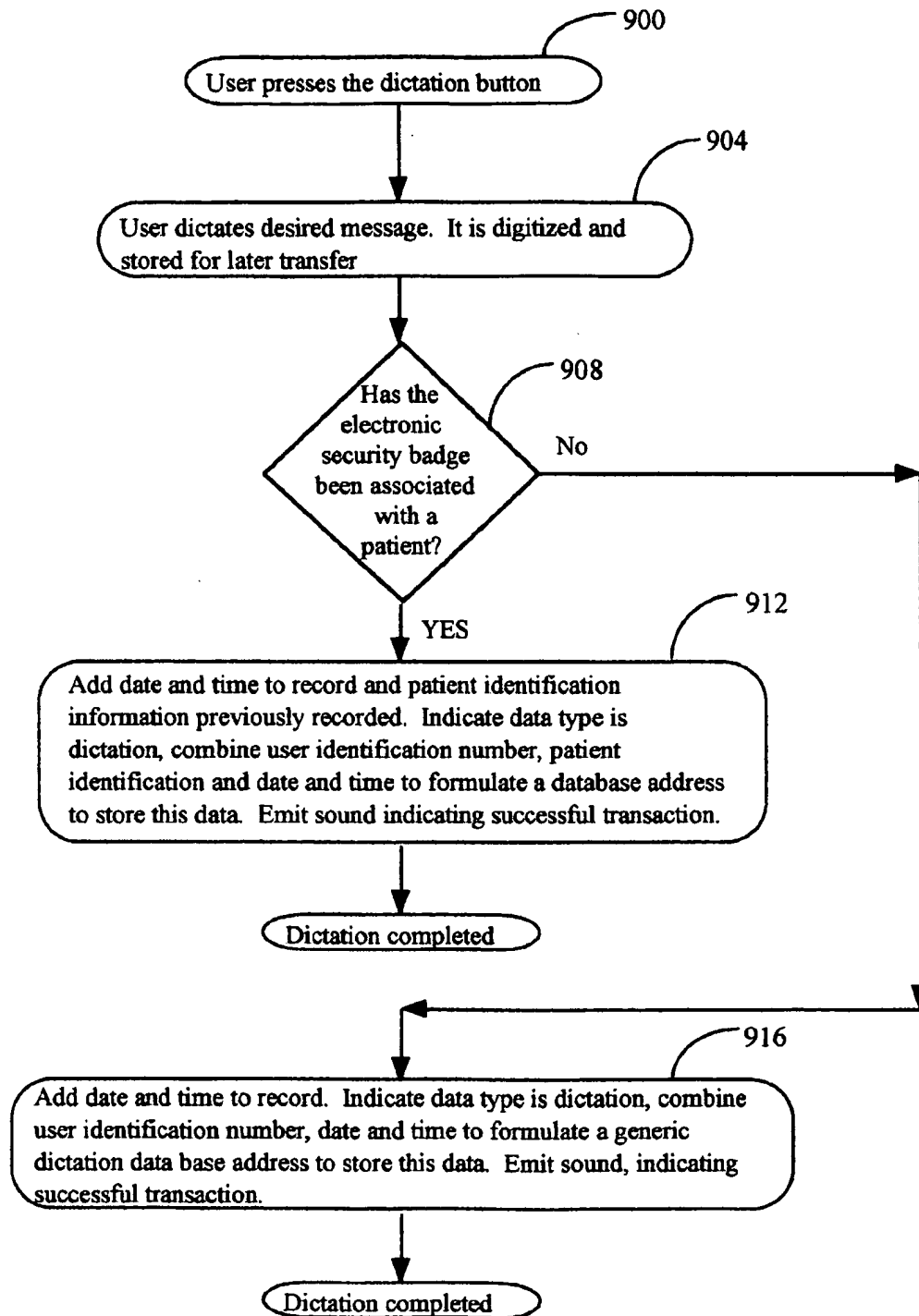


Figure 18

SECURITY BADGE FOR AUTOMATED ACCESS CONTROL AND SECURE DATA GATHERING

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates to computer systems for the management of information distributed across a plurality of intermittently and dynamically linked objects. More particularly, the present invention relates to a system and method for restricting access and monitoring and recording communications between a plurality of system users, a plurality of computer terminals on a computer network, and a plurality of smart devices. Further, the present invention relates to a system for logging a system user onto and off of a computer terminal through means of a device worn by the system user which communicates with the computer terminal.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

The increasing specialization and complexity of medical care has vastly increased the paperwork and record keeping that must be maintained by doctors, nurses, and other hospital staff persons. This has created an interest in performing routine record keeping, such as that of statistics generated by patient monitoring instruments or of medication dispensed for a patient's care that is typically performed by staff persons, in a more efficient, automatic, and reliable way. The rapid growth of network technologies has also created an interest in using the tools of the Internet to create a hospital Intranet, to link discrete hospital databases and make their data, images, and video records commonly accessible through a remote Internet/Intranet browser. The ease, however, with which electronically stored information may be intercepted and reproduced for illicit purposes has prompted increasing concerns regarding the privacy and authenticity of electronic information. Privacy and authenticity of patient information are particularly important concerns in a hospital.

Gombrich, U.S. Pat. No. 4,916,441 discloses an electronic health care management system using a portable handheld pocket terminal for use by medical staff personnel to upload data from medical instruments and monitoring devices, document and track observations and treatment, display scheduling information, and transmit stored information to the hospital's patient care database. Gombrich et al., U.S. Pat. No. 4,857,716 further discloses the use of barcodes on patient bracelets and patient-specific medical items such as drugs, blood samples, and IVs to be read by a portable handheld pocket terminal with a barcode reader used to provide an audit trail and automatic billing when drugs, therapy, or procedures are administered to patients. However, the pocket terminal of Gombrich is a general-purpose, not user-specific, device and does not automatically enable information exchange. In order to gain access, a caregiver is required to slide a separate card into a separate base unit connected to a base station in order to access the device. Therefore, the pocket terminal is not well-suited as a personal security and identification badge for a particular caregiver. The information gathering capabilities of the Gombrich device are also limited. The Gombrich system contemplates the use of a barcode reading wand to provide access, upload information, and authorize the administration of treatments and use of medical devices. Further, the Gombrich system lacks secure decryption and digital signature means. Even if it were adapted so that the public and private keys of a cryptographic system were encoded upon

a user's access card, the user would have to slide the card through the base unit every time a message was to be decoded, encrypted, or digitally signed, or in the alternative, compromise the security of the cryptographic system by uploading the user's public and private key rings onto the pocket terminal.

What is needed is a comprehensive data collection, management, and security system where information that is stored by a variety of hospital devices, such as patient monitors and bedside patient charting systems, would transmit information to an electronic "security badge" worn by a doctor or nurse authorized to care for the patient with whom the hospital device is related. The information exchange would take place automatically when the doctor or nurse came into proximity with the patient and pressed an activation button, and would be downloaded, automatically, to the hospital computer network when the doctor or nurse logged on to a computer terminal.

A data collection and management system further needs means for limiting and monitoring access by a multitude of users to a hospital computer network including a multitude of computer workstations and personal computers. Virtually all data regarding a patient's treatment in a hospital, clinic, or doctor's office is thought to be private. The problem of access control and data security is particularly acute in hospitals. Because hospitals operate around the clock, with multiple shifts and staff persons moving from one floor or one wing of the hospital to another, hospitals are unlikely to assign a computer terminal to a particular user. Further, a hospital presents an almost unique problem of having computer terminals or workstations with sensitive personal data in an unsecured environment. Computer terminals or workstations may be placed in unsupervised patient rooms, conference rooms, or nurse stations. Each such device may be able to retrieve all the records for any patient who has been in the hospital. Standard password protection presents only a small amount of security, as many password choices are easily guessed. If the password is complex users often write their password and leave it near a computer terminal or workstation where others may easily discover the password.

Restricted access systems today range from the simple to the sophisticated. It is typical for multiuser network systems to require a user to log on by entering a name and password to gain access to system information. The user is typically admonished to logout when leaving the workstation environment to prevent unauthorized access. The system may automatically log a user off after a predetermined period of inactivity. For users who must access the system frequently but intermittently, short inactivity periods for automatic logout will be a source of constant inconvenience. Alternatively, if long inactivity periods are used, another user may inadvertently use the terminal under the previous person's security authorization. Moreover, some users may frequently choose obvious or easily ascertainable passwords that can easily be broken. Others may write them down and store them where they may be easily intercepted. While this may not be a significant problem with personal computers in one's home or locked office, stronger and more reliable security is appropriate for sensitive information where computer terminals are shared by many or are located in open locations where others could eavesdrop.

Another restricted access system involves the use of user-specific password-generating devices. Typically, a user seeking access to a secure system is presented a code or instruction on a system terminal screen. The user enters the code or the information demanded by the instruction, via

manual entry or optical coupling, into his own password generating device. The password generating device then calculates a second code based upon the user's input and an encryption algorithm stored by the device, and displays this second code to the user for entry into the computer terminal or workstation. After the user enters the second code, the computer terminal or workstation then performs a verification check on it to confirm its creation by the password calculator of an authorized user of the computer terminal or workstation. If confirmed, the user is granted access in accordance with the user's system access privileges.

Yet another restricted access system requires a user to insert an authorization card, e.g. a PCMCIA card, into a computer card reader to authorize access and to authenticate information entered at the computer terminal with the user's digital signature. One potential weakness of such a system is that a hidden program could present documents for signature without the proper control of the user. Another weakness with these implementations is the relatively high risk that an authorized user will forget to or fail to remove his card in the card reader before he leaves the terminal—a risk that is particularly acute for a nurse or doctor who may have to leave a terminal in emergency situations to attend to a patient's care. Also, the loss of the card will result in a significant inconvenience to the owner and the system administrator.

Lemelson, in U.S. Pat. No. 5,202,929 and U.S. Pat. No. 5,548,660, discloses an access control system utilizing detection devices such as speech recognition equipment and fingerprint scanners to analyze one or more physical characteristics of a person attempting access to a computer. The system also incorporates physical presence sensors such as motion detectors and limit switches embedded in seat cushions to track the presence of an authorized user so as to prevent continued access to the system when the authorized user leaves or is absent. This system is primarily directed to accessing desktop computer terminals on a sensitive computer network and is not easily adaptable, however, for restricting access to laptops, portable instruments, medical equipment such as respirators, or electronically-controlled medication dispensers. Moreover, the implementation of the Lemelson invention requires a significant amount of detection equipment and analysis software, which may not be adaptable to the cost, space, and portability requirements of many devices for which restricted access and auditing control is desired.

There is also a need, for purposes of patient protection, quality control, record keeping, billing, and forensics, to monitor, control, and record access to the dispensation and administration of medicine, IVs, blood transfusions, and other treatments as well as the collection, administration, and testing of blood and tissue samples.

Gorman, U.S. Pat. No. 5,272,318 discloses a locked container bearing a barcode which can only be opened by means of a combination that is stored in the memory of a portable barcode scanning device. In order to ascertain this combination, the medical administrator must scan his own administrator code, the barcode on a patient's bracelet, and the barcode on the locked container within a preset time period. If the patient and treatment codes match, the combination is displayed so the administrator may unlock the container and apply the medication stored in the container. However, the access control of the Gorman invention could easily be subverted by writing down the combination that is displayed and opening the container at a later time. As soon as the combination was provided, the inventory sought to be controlled could be tampered with or misappropriated for

illegitimate purposes without detection. Also, the container itself is not enablingly disposed with both read and write capabilities. Consequently, it does not perform any record keeping of its own, because the invention as disclosed does not record access, attempted or otherwise, to the container. Better inventory control would be provided if auditing could be performed on the containers themselves as they are returned for recycling. Moreover, an improvement could be made through the use of internal codes such as public and private keys rather than visible barcodes to inhibit attempts to overcome the limited access safeguards of the system.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates to a limited access system for a computer network with a multitude of users. More particularly, the present invention relates to a limited access system providing automatic log-on and log-out for network users by means of coded communications between transceiver devices worn by network users and transceiver devices connected to computer terminals on the network. More particularly, the present invention relates to an automated and secure data gathering and security system for use in a hospital setting.

Many if not most employees and staff members of a hospital are accustomed to wearing an ID badge on their uniform, jacket, or around their neck, as a prerequisite to gaining access to restricted areas and to provide identification to other employees of the hospital. The preferred embodiment of the claimed invention expands the access control function of the basic ID badge by using it to facilitate access control to the hospital computer network and to information generated by various hospital implements such as monitoring devices. It also adds data buffering and wireless communication operability allowing it to gather information from monitoring devices and hospital instruments utilized by the patients receiving the badge-wearer's care. This modified ID badge will hereinafter be described as a "security badge."

In the preferred embodiment, each computer terminal with access to a database on the hospital computer network is equipped with a device for wireless information exchange with the security badge, using infrared transmitters and detectors. To access a computer terminal, a system user (defined as one who is wearing and is authorized to wear a security badge of the preferred embodiment) positions himself in front of the computer terminal so that a generally unobstructed signal path exists between the security badge and the computer terminal. The computer terminal intermittently transmits "interrogation" signals to detect, authenticate, and establish communications with nearby security badges. If a system user is properly positioned, the security badge may capture and process these interrogation signals, returning a signal by which the security verification system of the hospital computer network can authenticate (i.e., identify and verify) the access privileges of the system user. The preferred embodiment utilizes public key cryptography in this identification process.

If the security badge is authenticated through this cryptographic exchange, the system user is automatically logged onto the hospital computer network. The computer terminal displays the system user's own customized startup page through an interactive, hypertext-capable browser interface, and the system user may do anything consistent with the access privileges associated with the security badge. Meanwhile, the computer terminal continues to emit its interrogation signals, so that if the signal path between the

security badge and the computer terminal is terminated or obstructed for more than a preset period of time, which could occur, for example, if the system user leaves or turns away from the computer terminal, the screen is blanked off and the keyboard locked, preventing an intruder from gaining access to the computer terminal. If the interruption of the signal path is short-term, the system may restore access to the system user without any change in the display. An interruption lasting longer than a predetermined time period, for example, one minute, may cause the system user to be logged off automatically.

After the user is logged off, the system may be programmed to automatically delete and overwrite any files that have been cached on the computer terminal, disk drive, or RAM memory device during the system user's use. The need for such precautions may be particularly acute with typical Intranet/Internet browser programs that maintain large cache memories and a record of URL's accessed through the browser program. Other steps may be taken to prevent "hackers" from gaining unauthorized access to the computer terminal. For example, after log-off, the terminal may be isolated from remote network access by eliminating any network connection, with the exception of the Security Verification System, to the terminal. The network connection would not be reestablished until the next successful cryptographic exchange between the security badge of a system user and the computer terminal.

In the preferred embodiment, the security badge can be used to perform several other functions relating to data collection and data security. Other devices throughout the hospital may be equipped with transceiver devices capable of communicating patient-related information to the security badge. Such devices may include patient identification wrist bracelets, patient monitors, bedside patient charting systems, patient identification displays, medical instruments, and other hospital implements (more generally referred to as "smart devices"). Communication between such smart devices and a security badge may be enabled when the system user comes into proximity with the smart devices. This would enable information recorded by the system user onto the security badge about the patient to be automatically identified with the appropriate patient for record keeping, reference, and billing purposes. Should, for example, the current readings and settings from a patient monitor, ventilator, or other device be recorded, or a dictation be made about the patient's condition, the information is automatically identified with the patient's identification data provided by the device or a separate device for patient identification. If the hospital uses a system of electronic labeling or smart devices for medication containers or blood or IV bags, any information obtained from these electronic labels or smart devices is identified with the patient.

Standardized formatting and organization of data as it is recorded may also be achieved, so as to reduce the amount of human intervention, and the concomitant risk of error, needed to modify and archive the data for display and storage. In the preferred embodiment, as it receives information via dictation or from hospital implements, the security badge generates a database address for storing the information as a record and formats the record for browser-compatible presentation. Preferably, the information is formatted to a standard consistent with the hypertext markup language (HTML) or with a Java applet that will handle the data. In this manner a user seeking to reference the records at a later time will not be required to locate special programs to present the data, but will be provided full access to the records through a single program such as a typical network

browser or through the processing capabilities of a Java enabled processor.

After the security badge has collected and properly formatted data from smart devices, it may transmit the information to a computer terminal onto which it is logged. Moreover, the authenticity of the information transmitted may be guaranteed by having it digitally signed by the security badge prior to transmission.

Another aspect of the present invention provides limited access, via the security badge, to a medical container. This medical container could hold such things as medication, IVs, and blood samples for which an audit trail is desirable. Before a system user can administer treatment, information must be exchanged between the medical container and the security badge authorizing the treatment. The medical container records the patient and system user identification and time of treatment in memory and transmits the patient identification to the security badge. As an extra precaution the security badge may be required to have previously received the patient identification from a patient bracelet or another device having the patient identification and capable of compatible transmission means. This provides for a double audit trail of administered treatment, decreasing the probability of cover-ups for mistreatments or misappropriation of prescription medicine. The recorded information will be transferred to the hospital computer network twice, first when the data records from the security badge are transmitted to the network, and second when the medical container is returned for accounting and recycling.

An object of the claimed invention is to provide a self-authenticating identification badge to provide automatic logon and logout access to a computer system, so as to minimize the number of times a sign-on process is repeated and to minimize the amount of manual input required while maximizing the security of the restricted-access system or device. The present invention transforms the typical hospital identification badge from an implement for identification and access privileges with respect to other individuals to an implement for computerized identification and access privileges.

A more particular object of the claimed invention is to provide a self-authenticating identification badge that remains in frequent communication with a computer device, system, or network to verify the badge wearer's presence. The computer device, system, or network will be programmed to terminate access if this communication is interrupted. This may be implemented through the use of optical, magnetic, electric, radiofrequency, or infrared communications between the badge and a computer system or hospital electronic implement. To access the system, the user wearing the badge must point the badge in the general direction of the transceiver connected with the computer system or hospital electronic implement being accessed. When the user leaves the general vicinity of the computer system or hospital electronic implement, communication between the badge and the computer system or hospital implement is interrupted. During this interruption, the system will go into a lock mode preventing others from accessing, eavesdropping, or intercepting information on or from the system or implement.

Another object of the claimed invention is to reduce the amount of manual data entry, record keeping, and management by providing automated documentation of patient condition, prognosis, and administration of care. A related object of the claimed invention is to minimize the amount of training necessary to implement a comprehensive data

collection, data security, and data management system for hospital and patient records. One aspect in which this object is advanced is in the invention's operability to utilize a variety of relatively inexpensive browser applications.

Still another object of the claimed invention is to provide a hospital intranet system to integrate and automate the processes of staff and patient identification, inventory control, comprehensive record keeping and auditing of patient treatment, and data collection and management for analysis, browser-based reference, and storage.

Yet another object of the claimed invention is to provide a portable transceiver and data buffering device for automated information retrieval at the point and time of care. The present invention implements a self-authenticating identification badge providing self-identification to and electronic retrieval of data stored in a variety of hospital electronic implements including diagnostic and monitoring devices and electronic lock-lid containers for medicines, IVs, blood samples, etc.

Still another object of the claimed invention is to provide a portable transceiver and data buffering device incorporating cryptography to prevent intelligible unauthorized interception of transmitted data. This cryptography may also be used to digitally sign and authenticate information that is transmitted by a data transceiver and buffering device to a computer system.

Yet another object of the claimed invention is to provide for easy, browser-based reference of a patient's data records. The present invention provides for automatic formatting of data records as they are created or introduced into or retrieved from the database system. A portable transceiver and data buffering device according to the present invention may generate database addresses for data it records for storage when downloaded to the system. It may also incorporate identification and time stamps into data records stored by the device or the addresses of the data records. Further, the portable transceiver and data buffering device may modify data it records to conform to a standard, such as that of the hypertext markup language (HTML) or a Java applet, amenable for display by a network browser or a Java enabled computer.

Yet another object of the claimed invention is to provide a portable transceiver and data buffering device with a digital dictaphone to digitally record messages for storage with a patient's data records.

Still another object of the claimed invention is to provide a limited access medication dispenser that conditions access on the time of attempted treatment, the identity of the system user attempting to administer the medication disposed within the container, and the identity of the patient for whom the medication was dispensed. The medication dispenser may also record the time and identities of the patient and system user for accounting and billing purposes.

Yet another object of the claimed invention is to provide a hospital intranet system capable of double-auditing in the administration of medicines, IVs, or blood samples disposed within an electronic lock-lid medical container. Both the portable transceiver and data buffering device and the lock-lid medical container would store information about the identity of the nurse or doctor dispensing the treatment, the patient being treated, and the time treatment was given. This double-auditing function provides more thorough inventory control and better protection of patients through better detection of mismanaged care, detection that is not easily subverted by a staff-person's attempts to conceal the treatment.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The present invention is more easily understood with reference to the drawings, in which:

FIG. 1 is a perspective view of a security badge capable of communicating with computer terminals and a plurality of smart devices.

FIG. 2 is a perspective view of a wrist bracelet to be worn by patients or other persons to provide identification through wireless communication with security badges or other smart devices.

FIG. 3 is a plan view of a computer terminal or workstation being operated by a system user where access is conditioned upon communications between the security badge and the computer terminal.

FIG. 4 is a plan view of a hospital patient room equipped with a variety of computerized monitoring, treatment, and information devices.

FIG. 5 is a perspective view of a medical container equipped with an electromechanical locking device controlled by communications through transceiver components.

FIG. 6 is a block diagram of various electrical components which may be incorporated within the security badge.

FIG. 7 is a block diagram of a computer network according to the present invention, including a plurality of workstations and databases for data record retrieval and storage and a security verification system.

FIG. 8 presents the base memory contents of a security badge.

FIG. 9 presents the contents of the information transferred from a wrist bracelet according to the present invention to a security badge.

FIG. 10 presents the contents of the information transferred from a medical container according to the present invention to a security badge.

FIG. 11 presents the contents of a digital message record incorporating a dictated message and other information corresponding to the dictated message.

FIG. 12 is a list of information transferred from a patient monitoring or therapeutic device to a security badge.

FIG. 13A is a textual representation of a URL address of medical dispensation record formed in part from the patient's identification number and a timestamp.

FIG. 13B is a graphical representation of a medical dispensation record with HTML codes for displaying the information in a network browser.

FIG. 13C is a graphical representation of the record of FIG. 13B as it would be viewed by a system user through a network browser.

FIG. 14A is a graphical representation of a medical administration record with HTML codes for displaying the information in a network browser.

FIG. 14B is a graphical representation of the record of FIG. 14A as it would be viewed by a system user through a network browser.

FIGS. 15A-15F are a functional flow chart showing the steps a computer terminal executes in logging on a system user using a security badge for identification.

FIGS. 16A-16F are a functional flow chart showing the steps a security badge executes in logging on to a computer system, sending data, or signing a document.

FIGS. 17A-17C are a functional flow chart of the steps a security badge executes in establishing an association with a patient and acquiring data from other computerized devices.

FIG. 18 is a function flow chart of the steps a security badge follows to record and generate addresses for dictated messages.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

The present invention may be adapted for use in a wide variety of applications, and is suitable for any environment in which numerous data records having one or multiple forms and/or formats are to be collected, stored, archived, retrieved, or translated. By way of illustration and not by way of limitation, the preferred embodiment is presented in the context of a hospital environment, in which typically there are numerous computer systems in use by various health care professionals in one or several hospitals, and each professional often desires to have access to the patient records created by other professionals in that or other hospitals.

In FIG. 1, the mobile transceiver and data buffering device of the preferred embodiment is illustrated as a security badge 10 which may be clipped to a person's clothing or worn by chain around a person's neck. While this embodiment implements the claimed invention on an ID badge, the claimed invention could be instantiated in other shapes, such as a ring or a personalized pointing device. In keeping with its preferred resemblance to a typical identification badge, the security badge 10 is affixed with identification text 12 and graphic display 16. The security badge 10 incorporates a wireless communication means 14, an audible alerting device 20, an activation button 26, a microphone and digitizer 22, and a dictation button 26. The security badge 10 may also incorporate additional electronic identification means 30, such as a magnetic strip. Because of its low cost, energy efficiency, minimally regulated status, and standardization by the Infrared Data Association (IrDA), infrared transmitter and receiver components (not illustrated) supporting serial infrared communications links are the preferred wireless communication means 14 of the invention. A variety of infrared communications devices, such as Hewlett Packard's HSDL-1001 transceiver components, may be used to implement the preferred communication means. Alternatively, other communication means—such as acoustic, radiofrequency, or electromagnetic coupling—may be supported. The graphic display 16 of the security badge 10 may be any of a variety of forms, including but not limited to a photograph, a light emitting diode array, a liquid crystal panel, and an active-matrix display. Security badge 10 also incorporates processor circuitry 260 illustrated in FIG. 6.

In FIG. 2, the wrist bracelet of the preferred embodiment is illustrated as a patient identification bracelet 40 having a flexible, extendible band 44, a securing clasp 48, a processing device 56, and wireless communication means 52. The patient identification bracelet is similar to existing bracelets used to identify patients in hospitals, with the exception of the processing device 56 and communication means 52, which are added. Textual information (not illustrated) is typically affixed to the extendible band 44. Communication means 52 are preferably, but may not be, similar to the wireless communication means 14 of the security badge 10. The processing device 56 of FIG. 2 includes a memory element that contains a variety of patient identification information (see 320, FIG. 9), regarding the patient to whom the wrist bracelet 40 is attached.

FIG. 3 graphically illustrates a typical setup that would permit communications between a system user 68 wearing a

security badge 10 and a computer terminal 60 equipped with wireless transceiver device 64 compatible with the wireless communication means 14 (FIG. 1) of the security badge 10.

FIG. 4 sets forth a plan drawing of a patient's room 104 including a computer terminal or workstation 60, a patient monitor 80, and a patient treatment device 116, each equipped with wireless transceiver device 64. Also shown is a patient bed 88 and an optional bedside communication device 96 which may or may not be compatible with wireless transceiver device 64. Communication device 96 may be connected to an optional patient identification display 100 equipped with wireless transceiver device 64 or to a patient identification display 120 outside of the room 104.

FIG. 5 sets forth a graphical representation of the medical container 200 of the preferred embodiment. Medical container 200, which may be used to transport and provide auditing and limited access for medications, blood or tissue samples, or other inventory, includes a lid 204, a securing latch 232, a latch release button 228, and an electronic identification device 224. Textual identification 208 may be attached to the lid 204. The electronic identification device 224 includes wireless communication means 212 compatible with communication means 14 (FIG. 1) of the security badge 10, and may also include an activation button 220 and an audible alerting device 216. Release of the latch may be conditioned on a time-window for treatment, the successful exchange of identification information between a system user 68's security badge 10 and the electronic identification device 224, and the manual depression of the latch release button 228. The audible alerting device 216 may serve to remind the system user 68 when it is time to apply the enclosed treatment. The electronic identification device 224 further includes means, not illustrated, for storing the medication information structure 340 of FIG. 10.

FIG. 6 sets forth a diagram of the processor circuitry 260 of the security badge 10, which includes a processor 250 which may be linked to several of the following: a battery 252, a real-time clock 254 to provide the current time and date, a memory element 262, an audible alerting device 20, infrared transmitter and detector device 22, a dictation button 26, and a display 258 such as a light emitting diode array, an LCD screen, or a passive or active matrix screen. An illustration of certain "base contents" 300 that may be stored by the memory element 262 is set forth in FIG. 8.

Referring now to FIG. 7, the overall system of the preferred embodiment is illustrated as an electronic system referred to as computer network 194, including a plurality of personal computers or computer terminals comprising workstations 154 and 155 (designated "Workstation 1" and "Workstation N"), which may be located in patient rooms, nurse stations, doctor offices, and administrative offices; a plurality of databases comprising databases 158 and 162 (designated "Database 1" and "Database N"); an Admit, Discharge, and Transfer (ADT) system 166; at least one laboratory system 170; various bedside treatment devices 178 such as ventilators and IV infusion pumps; patient monitoring devices 182; a pharmacy system 186; a security verification system 168; and a unit dose medication dispenser 150. The individual components of the computer network 194 may communicate with each other via a communication network 190, which may comprise a combination of local and wide area networks, using ethernet, serial line, token ring, wireless, or other communication standards. Communication network 190 may also be arranged in such a manner to be part of the Internet or as an individual Intranet. The functions performed by the various components of the preferred embodiment of the computer

network 194 may be divided among multiple computer systems or consolidated into fewer components.

A. Operation of a Computer Terminal in Access Control

In the preferred embodiment, authentication and data security will be illustrated through the use of conventional "public key" cryptography, such as that implemented in RSA, though other well-known techniques for authenticating a user and securing transmitted data may be employed. In implementing public key cryptography, the security badges and computer terminals are equipped with "private key rings" of one or more private keys and a "public key ring" of one or more public keys. Depending upon their sophistication and the sensitivity of the information they contain, other smart devices in the hospital, such as monitoring devices or medical instruments, may also be equipped with cryptographic means. The private keys of each security badge 10 are never transmitted or otherwise made accessible outside the security badge 10. For strong compression, each public and private key would typically be at least 128 bytes long. Today, the preferred implementation for smart card encryption capabilities utilizes the Advanced RISC Micro-processor (ARM), such as the ARM 6, the ARM 710, or a variety of customized chips integrating the ARM technology, such as the Mykronics Capstone or VLSI's VMS 210. A variety of other processors, including the Intel x86 processor, would also be suitable.

FIGS. 15A–15F describe the operation of a computer terminal 60 (FIG. 3) in establishing and monitoring access by a system user 68 wearing a security badge 10 (FIG. 1). Access is established by providing a substantially unobstructed signal path between the physical wireless communication means 14 (FIG. 1) (preferably comprising infrared transmitter and receiver components (see FIG. 1)) of the security badge 10 and the wireless transceiver device 64 of the computer terminal 60. The establishment of an unobstructed signal path is facilitated by having the security badge 10 worn on or attached to the front of the system user 68 attempting to logon the computer terminal 60. While it is not necessary that the security badge 10 be worn by or attached to the clothing of the system user 68, securing the security badge 10 to the system user 68 minimizes the probability that it will be lost by the system user 68.

Commencing with FIG. 15A, in step 600 the computer terminal 60 transmits an interrogation signal, which is fashioned from a private key of the security verification system 168 (FIG. 7) of the computer network 194, a large random number, and other identification information unique to the security verification system 168. Provided a substantially unobstructed signal path exists between the wireless transceiver device 64 (FIG. 3) of the computer terminal 60 and the wireless communication means 14 (FIG. 1) of a security badge 10, the security badge 10 will intercept, process, and be operable to return a part of the interrogation signal in a re-encrypted form (according to the operation of the security badge 10 set forth in FIGS. 16A–16F, infra).

In step 604, the computer terminal 60 waits for a period sufficient to allow a security badge 10 to receive, process, re-encrypt, and re-transmit the interrogation signal. If no return response is received, in step 608 the computer terminal 60 waits for a predetermined period of time and, returning to step 600, transmits another interrogation signal. If a return response is received, in step 612 the format of the return response is evaluated. If the format is unrecognized, in step 608 the computer terminal 60 waits for a predeter-

mined period of time and, returning to step 600, transmits another interrogation signal.

If a return response of a recognized format is received by the computer terminal 60, in step 616 it is decrypted or authenticated using the public key of the security badge 10 which returned the response. In a public key cryptographic system, encryption with a private key uniquely identifies the system user 68 possessing that key (assuming the private key has not been stolen) because an encrypted message can only be decoded using the public key matching the system user 68's private key. Accordingly, the security verification system 168, which stores the public keys of each security badge 10 given access privileges to the computer network, attempts to decrypt the re-encrypted interrogation signal using the public keys it retains.

There are at least two ways in which the decryption procedure may be carried out. In one procedure, the security verification system 168 attempts to decrypt the response signal, one public key at a time, until either a successful decryption is achieved or all the public keys stored by the security verification system 168 fail. Preferably, however, the identification information will have been appended to the encrypted portion of the return response purporting to identify the security badge 10. The security verification system 168 then attempts to decrypt the return response using the public key corresponding to the appended identification information. A successful decryption identifies the security badge 10 that originated the return response. If the decryption is successful, a verification algorithm is used to compare the decrypted return response to the original, pre-encrypted interrogation signal.

It would, of course, be possible to program the computer terminal 60 itself to perform some or all the functions of the security verification system 168. A physically separate security verification system 168, however, will safeguard the computer network 194's private keys and the list of public keys of valid system users, preventing appropriation of the keys by one breaking into the computer terminal 60 itself.

As an additional precaution, the security badge 10 may be programmed to detect and reject interrogation signals that are short and probabilistically non-random. This would frustrate a cryptanalyst's attempt to derive a security badge 10's private key by interrogating the security badge 10 with short messages and intercepting the re-encrypted response. This precaution is especially justified if the security badge 10 is adapted to communicate with devices and computer terminals foreign to the computer network 194 and its security verification system 168. This precaution may also limit the damage that could be imposed were a private key of the security verification system 168 compromised.

In step 620, if the decryption and verification failed to identify a security badge 10 having access privileges to the computer terminal 60, then the operation proceeds again to step 608, where the computer terminal 60 waits for a predetermined period of time and, returning to step 600, transmits another interrogation signal.

Because a security badge 10 may be misplaced by or stolen from a system user 68, additional security measures are warranted. The security verification system 168 may be programmed to require that a system user 68 manually enter a password at the beginning of each day. Alternatively, the system could require manual password entry at random times throughout the day, even while the system user 68 is logged on, flagging possible theft and unauthorized use of the security badge 10 should the proper password not be detected. Further, a switch may be incorporated onto the

security badge 10 to force it into a mode requiring password entry. More elaborate means, including voice identification or a fingerprint or retinal scan, could also be incorporated into the security badge 10 or at computer terminals 60 to reinforce such security. It is to be expected, however, that should a system user 68 be dispossessed of a security badge 10, that he or she immediately notify the system security administrator to deactivate the access privileges of the security badge 10.

Provided a security badge 10 having access privileges to the computer terminal 60 has been identified, in step 624 the security verification system 168 determines whether or not to require the entry of a password to enable logon by the system user 68. This procedure provides a safeguard should the security badge 10 be stolen, deterring unauthorized logon attempts with the threat that the security verification system 168 will detect the breach and apprehend the violator.

If password entry is required, then in step 632 the computer terminal 60 prompts the system user 68 for a password. Information that is entered may not only be processed by the computer terminal 60, but also transmitted to the security badge 10 in encrypted form in order to reset a flag maintained by the security badge 10 indicating that password entry is required. In step 636, the password is analyzed. If the wrong password has been entered, in step 640 a counter is incremented. If the wrong password was entered less than three consecutive times (step 640), the security verification system 168 returns to step 632 and again prompts the system user 68 to enter the password. After three failed attempts (step 640), however, in step 644, the security verification system 168 disables recognition of the security badge 10, records the location of the failed attempt, and notifies the system administration to alert it to a possible attempted breach of the system.

If within the first three attempts, the correct password is entered, the operation advances to step 648, logging the system user 68 onto the computer terminal 60 and providing access to program features and databases in accordance with the access privileges of system user 68. In step 652, the computer terminal queries the security badge 10 for the existence of data records to transfer to the computer network 194 and causes the security badge 10 to transmit them, if any, to the computer terminal 60 for database storage, in accordance with the operation detailed in FIGS. 16A-16F.

After the completion of the data transfer, if warranted, by the security badge 10 to the computer terminal 60, the computer terminal 60 will continue to periodically poll the security badge 10 with recommitment signals. These recommitment signals may be specifically addressed to the system user 68's security badge 10 and may incorporate a different random number with each polling. Further, these recommitment signals may be encrypted with the security badge 10's public key stored by the security verification system 168, instead of or in addition to encryption by the security verification system's private key, so that they may only be intelligibly decrypted by the security badge 10 itself, using its own exclusively-guarded private key. By periodically polling the security badge 10, the user input and output devices of the computer terminal 60, including the monitor, keyboard, and mouse, can be disabled if the computer terminal ceases receiving response signals from the security badge 10. A system user 68 may also be automatically logged out by means of periodic polling.

This process of periodic polling is illustrated in steps 656 through 692 of FIGS. 15C-15E. The computer terminal

waits for a predetermined interval in step 656, transmits a recommitment signal in step 660, and probes for a response signal in step 664. If there is a recommitment response signal, in step 668 its content is evaluated. If the content of the recommitment response signal is accepted, the operation proceeds to step 696, discussed infra. If either there is no recommitment response signal in step 664, or if the content of the recommitment response signal is rejected in step 668, an idle/invalid link counter (not illustrated) maintained by the security verification system 168 and whose initial value relative to the logon event was zero, is incremented in step 672.

The idle/invalid link counter permits the system user 68 to temporarily turn away from the transceiver device 64 of the computer terminal 60 or to otherwise interfere with the signal path. However, if the computer terminal 60 does not receive a recommitment response signal after several requests, the display of the computer terminal 60 is blanked, input from any keyboard or pointing device may be ignored, and other processing activities may be suspended. The computer terminal 60, however, continues to transmit recommitment signals. Should the system user 68's security badge 10 respond within a second period of time, the display will be restored to its previous condition and the keyboard, pointing device, and processor will resume normal operation. If the security badge 10, however, does not transmit a correct recommitment response signal during the second period of time, the system user 68 is automatically logged off the computer network 194. When the user is logged off the computer system, a software program may also be used to remove any temporary files that have been stored on disk or in RAM memory, e.g. the cache file used by the network browser program. Furthermore, access by the computer terminal 60 to the computer network 194 may be terminated with the exception of the link between the computer terminal 60 and the security verification system 168, which may be preserved to determine if a new user is attempting to use the computer terminal 60 to log onto the computer network 194. In this manner a system user 68's access to the computer network 194 is restricted while logged off and enlarged while logged on.

This computer terminal access security operation is described more particularly in steps 676 through 692 of FIGS. 15D-15E. The value of the idle/invalid link counter is compared in step 676 to a predetermined disable I/O limit. If that value does not exceed the disable I/O limit, the periodic polling continues with step 656. If and when the value of the idle/invalid link counter does exceed the disable I/O limit, in step 684, the input and output devices of the computer terminal 60 are disabled, if they have not been previously disabled (step 680). In step 688, the value of the idle/invalid link counter is compared to a predetermined logout limit. Periodic polling is continued in step 656 if the value of the idle/invalid link counter does not exceed the logout limit. If and when this value is exceeded, in step 692 the system user 68 is logged off the computer terminal 60 and information stored in memory or cache on the computer terminal by the user is overwritten.

If the content of the recommitment response signal is valid (step 668), in step 696 the security verification system 168 processes the signal through a verification algorithm, attempting to decrypt the signal with public keys and comparing the decrypted output with the original recommitment signal. If the decrypted output matches the original recommitment signal (step 700), then in step 704 the computer network 194 recognizes that the system user 68 is still using the computer system. The idle/invalid link counter is

reset and the display and other input and output functions of the computer terminal 60, if disabled, are restored. If the decrypted output does not match the original recommitment signal (step 700), then in step 708 the computer network 194 recognizes that another system user 68 is nearby. If the value of the idle/invalid link counter exceeds a third limit (step 712), then the original system user 68 is logged off, memory cache and temporary workspace utilized by the original system user 68 or applications executed by or through the original system user 68 is deleted and/or overwritten, and the new system user 68 is logged on to the computer terminal. If the value of the idle/invalid link counter has not yet exceeded a third limit (step 712), then the new system user 68 is recognized but not logged onto the terminal, for the original system user has not been logged off for a sufficient period of time.

B. Operation of a Security Badge in Access Control

FIGS. 16A–16F describe the operation of a security badge 10 (FIG. 1) in responding to interrogation and recommitment signals transmitted by a proximately located computer terminal 60 (FIG. 3). In order to conserve power, the security badge 10 is preferably capable of alternating between sleep and wake states. During a sleep state, the security badge 10 is not responsive to signals transmitted by computer terminals 60 and other proximate smart devices, and may be essentially “invisible” to such devices. This alternating sleep/wake cycle is described in steps 724 through 732. In step 724, the security badge 10 maintains a wake state in which it is capable of receiving and transmitting signals through its wireless communication means 14. If in step 728, the time allotted for the wake state has expired and no signal has been received via the wireless communication means 14 of the security badge 10, then in step 732 the security badge 10 is powered down for the allotted duration of its sleep state, before cycling back to the wake state of step 724.

If a signal is received during its wake state, however, the alternating sleep and wake cycle is suspended in order to process and respond to the signal. In step 736, the security badge 10 processes and identifies the signal. If the signal is identified as a nonspecifically addressed signal (step 740) or as being addressed to the instant security badge 10 processing the signal (step 742), then further evaluation of the signal is performed, beginning with step 760, discussed infra.

A signal that is neither nonspecifically addressed (step 740) nor specifically addressed (step 742) to the instant security badge 10 is regarded as being extrinsically addressed to a second security badge 10. This situation may arise when two system users 68 with two security badges 10 are in the vicinity of the same computer terminal 60, one of them being logged onto the computer terminal 60. In step 744, the extrinsically addressed signal is evaluated to determine whether or not it is of a nature seeking an identification signal from the second security badge 10. If not, the instant security badge 10 ignores the extrinsically addressed signal and retires to wake state 724. If, however, the extrinsically addressed signal is of a nature requesting an identification signal, in step 752 the instant security badge 10 pauses to permit the second security badge 10 to transmit its identification signal. In step 756, the security badge 10 then transmits its own identification signal to the computer terminal 60 to indicate its presence, retiring afterward to wake state 724. This may allow the security verification system 168 to temporarily blank the screen to prevent unauthorized access to data by one system user 68 through the access privileges of another system user 68. Alternatively, after

repeated failures by the computer terminal 60 to receive a response signal from the second security badge 10, the second system user 68 may be logged out and the instant system user 68 logged in.

In the event that the signal was either nonspecifically addressed (step 740) or specifically addressed to the instant security badge 10 (step 742), the operation advances to step 760, where the signal is further evaluated to determine whether it is an interrogation or recommitment signal, in which case it would have been encrypted by a private key of the security verification system 168. If in step 760 it is identified as an interrogation or recommitment signal, then in step 764, a key ID tag appended to the signal is used to locate the public key stored in the memory element 262 (FIG. 6) of the security badge 10, with which it decrypts the signal.

In step 768, the decrypted signal is evaluated for information positively or probabilistically identifying the security verification system 168 as the source of the signal. This step implements the precaution of programming the security badge 10 to detect and reject interrogation signals that are too short or probabilistically non-random. If the decrypted signal is not distinguishable as originating from the security verification system 168, then in step 772, the security badge 10 stores and transmits an invalid message code, retiring to wake state 724. If the decrypted signal is recognized as originating from the security verification system 168 (step 768), then in step 774, the signal or a portion thereof is reencrypted using the private key of the security badge 10 and transmitted, in step 776, to the computer terminal 60. Following this transmission, the security badge 10 retires to wake state 724.

Turning back to step 760, if the signal is not identified as an interrogation or recommitment signal, in step 784 the signal is evaluated to determine whether it is prompting the security badge 10 to transmit stored data to the computer terminal 60, in which case in step 788 the data is transmitted before the security badge 10 retires to wake state 724. If the signal was not identified as a prompt for data transfer (step 784), then in step 794 the signal is evaluated to determine whether it is prompting the security badge 10 to delete specified data, in which case in step 796 the specified data is deleted before the security badge 10 retires to wake state 724.

If the signal was not identified as a request to delete specified data (step 792), then in step 800, the signal is evaluated to determine whether it is prompting the security badge 10 to digitally sign a document or data record using its private key. If the signal is not identified as a request to digitally sign a document, the signal is treated as an unspecified command, upon which the security badge 10 takes no action, instead retiring to wake state 724. If the signal is identified as requesting a digital signature (step 800), in step 804 the computer terminal 60 or the security badge 10, by means of its audible alerting device 20, prompts the system user 68 to depress the activation button 18. In step 808 the security badge 10 waits for the system user 68 to respond for a limited time period. In step 812, if the activation button 18 has not been depressed before the expiration of this limited time period, then in step 816 the security badge 10 returns a signal indicating that the signature has not been provided, retiring then to wake state 724. In this manner a digital signature will not be provided without the affirmative agreement and action of the system user 68. If in step 812, the activation button 18 had been depressed within the limited time period, in step 820 the document or a message digest of the document is encrypted in whole or in part and

transmitted to the computer terminal 60, the security badge 10 afterward retiring to wake state 724.

Though not illustrated, the activation button 18 may be pressed for several seconds in order to suspend automatic logon access to a computer terminal 60 without being prompted to enter a password. The security badge 10 may emit an audible sound to indicate that automatic logon has been suspended.

C. Operation of a Security Badge in Gathering Data

FIGS. 17A through 17C describe the operation of a security badge 10 in gathering and exchanging data with smart devices with which it is in communicable range. This operation is described particularly, but not by way of limitation, in the context of a hospital, where the exchange of information between a security badge 10 and a plurality of smart devices assigned to various patients and distributed throughout the hospital may be limited by the access privileges corresponding to patients whom or with whom the system user 68 is authorized to diagnose, treat, or interact. A single hospital room 104 (FIG. 4) may include a number of smart devices, including a computer terminal or workstation 80, a patient identification display 100, a bedside communication device 96, a patient treatment device 116, and a patient monitor 60, each of which may communicate with the security badge 10 or, in some circumstances, with each other.

In the preferred embodiment, data exchange between a security badge 10 and a smart device directed to a particular patient is conditioned upon and must be preceded by establishing an "association" between the system user 68 and the patient to whom the smart device is directed. Preferably, an association is digitally recorded by the security badge 10 in the form of information uniquely identifying the patient, the smart device and/or the security badge 10 itself, and the time and date of the association. This information may later be appended to data records exchanged with smart devices and computer terminals 60, providing the data records with a complete audit trail. Further, smart devices and security badges 10 themselves may also digitally record associations in a same or similar fashion.

Turning to step 824, a system user 68 attempts to initiate a communication link or exchange information with a smart device by depressing the activation button 18 (FIG. 1). Depending on the sophistication of these devices and the sensitivity of the information they contain, the communications established with these smart devices may or may not utilize public key cryptography. While link initialization may be automated rather than user-initiated, making the links user-initiated allows the security badge 10 to conserve energy and prevents unnecessary link initialization with devices about which the system user 68 is not concerned. The smart device preferably has compatible communication means with the security badge 10, both of which are preferably oriented in sufficient directional and spatial proximity to prevent other smart devices from also responding to signals transmitted by the security badge 10. Alternatively, the smart devices may be individually and manually enabled to communicate through the use of activation switches incorporated in the smart devices. Provided that the signal path between the security badge 10 and the smart device is substantially unobstructed and short enough that signal transmissions are not excessively attenuated, a communications link is established. In step 828, the security badge 10 evaluates the existence, if any, of an association between the

security badge 10 and any patient (not necessarily the particular patient to which the linked smart device is directed). If there is no association, in step 832 the security badge 10 transmits to the smart device its own identification information and a request for data to be returned. If there is an association, in step 836 the security badge 10 transmits its own identification information, patient identification information (of the patient with whom the security badge 10 is associated), and a request for data to be returned. Steps 832 and 836 are each followed by step 840, in which the security badge 10 waits for a predetermined time period for a response from the smart device. If no response is received within the predetermined time period (step 848), then in step 852 the security badge 10 emits a first audible sound to alert the system user 68 that no response was received from the smart device, and in step 856 the operation initiated by the system user 68 in step 824 is terminated. If instead a response is received before the predetermined time period elapses (step 848), then in step 860 the data contained in the response signal is stored as a data record, and a timestamp is added to the data record.

If the data record recorded in step 860 is a patient identification record (step 864), and if the security badge 10 is already associated with that patient (step 868), then in step 876 the security badge 10 emits a second audible sound readily distinguishable to the human ear from the first audible sound of step 852, signaling to the system user 68 that the security badge 10 is associated with the patient and that the exchange of information was successful.

If the data record recorded in step 860 is a patient identification record (step 864), but the security badge 10 is not associated with any patient (steps 868 and 872), then in step 874 the security badge 10 records an association with the patient and in step 876 emits said second audible sound.

If the data record recorded in step 860 is a patient identification record (step 864), but the security badge 10 is associated with a second patient (steps 868 and 872), then in step 878 the association with said second patient is closed and a new association is established. In step 880 the security badge 10 emits said second audible sound twice to indicate the closure of a previous association and the initiation of the current association.

If the data record recorded in step 860 is not a patient identification record (step 864) but if the security badge 10 has been associated with a patient (step 888), then in step 892 the data record is modified to include staff and patient identification previously recorded in establishing the current association between security badge 10 and patient. The timestamp (recorded in step 860) and patient identification are further used to formulate a database address destination to store the data after it is transferred to the computer network 194 (FIG. 7). Further, the security badge 10 emits said second audible sound to indicate the successful transaction.

If the data record recorded in step 860 is not a patient identification record (step 864) and if the security badge 10 has not been associated with a patient (step 888), then in step 896 the data record is modified to include identification information attributable to the system user 68 (FIG. 3) to which the security badge 10 is assigned. If the data record includes patient information, it and the timestamp (recorded in step 860) are further used to formulate a database address destination to store the data after it is transferred to the computer network 194 (FIG. 7). Further, the security badge 10 emits said second audible sound to indicate the successful transaction.

FIG. 9 illustrates the contents of the patient identification information 320 that may be transmitted by a wrist bracelet to a security badge 10 during a communications link with the security badge 10.

Although not illustrated by flow chart, an association with a patient may be manually terminated by depressing activation button 18 for a few seconds, after which the security badge 10 emits an audible sound to indicate that the association has been terminated. An association with a patient may also be automatically terminated after a sufficient period of inactivity with respect to the security badge 10.

FIG. 18 describes the operation of the security badge 10 in digitally recording dictation. While observing or treating a patient, system user 68 may, in step 900, press the dictation button 26 (FIG. 1) and dictate messages (step 904) into the microphone 22 of the security badge 10. Digitizing circuitry incorporated in the processing circuitry 260 (FIG. 6) of the security badge 10 digitizes the message (step 904), which is recorded as a message record in memory element 262. If the security badge 10 is associated with a patient at the time the dictation is recorded (step 908), then in step 912 patient identification information and a timestamp are incorporated into the message record. Further, in step 912 a database address is formulated for the message record using the timestamp, the dictation data type, and patient identification information. Further, in step 912 the security badge 10 emits said second audible sound. If the security badge 10 is not associated with a patient at the time the dictation is recorded (step 908), then in step 916 a timestamp is incorporated into the message record. Further, in step 916 the dictation data type and timestamp are combined to form a partial database address for the message record. Further, in step 916 the security badge 10 emits said second audible sound. FIG. 11 illustrates the dictation information 360 that may be incorporated in the message record.

Other aspects, not included in FIGS. 17A through 17C, may be involved in communicating with or between certain smart devices. In one embodiment, the presence of a system user 68 in proximity to a patient enables communication between the patient's wrist bracelet 40 (FIG. 2) and the system user 68's security badge 10. The communication link may be initiated by depressing the activation button 18 on the security badge 10 and/or an activation button (not illustrated) on said wrist bracelet 40, provided there is a complete signal path between the security badge 10 and the wrist bracelet 40. Once a communication link is established, the security badge 10 identifies the patient and records the establishment of an association with that patient. The security badge 10 may also request and receive additional information stored by the wrist bracelet 40, providing a beep, vibration or other sensational signal to indicate a successful transmission or to alert the system user 68. The wrist bracelet 40 may also record in its own memory the staff identification information and current date and time from the security badge 10 to provide an audit trail of the caregivers who have associated themselves with the patient. If communication and association is established with another wrist bracelet 40 or, if not, after a preset period of time has elapsed, the security badge 10 regards the association to have terminated and alerts the system user 68 to this fact with another beep, vibration or other sensational means of communication.

In another embodiment, the wireless communication means 52 of wrist bracelet 40 (FIG. 2) may utilize alternate communication means, such as magnetic coupling or low power radio transmission, rather than the preferred infrared

means of the security badge 10. Similarly, the bedside communication device 96 (FIG. 4) of a patient bed 88 may also utilize alternate communication means. Further, the communication range of wrist bracelets 40 or other smart devices may be limited in order to prevent two devices from receiving the same request. Instead of communicating directly with the security badge 10, the wrist bracelet 40 may communicate with patient identification display 100 directly or indirectly via communication with the communication means of a bedside communication device 96. A patient identification display 100 may also have transceiver device 64 compatible with the communication means 14 of the security badge 10. The smart devices may be arranged and implemented so that the patient identification display 100 retrieves the patient identification information from the wrist bracelet 40 and electronically displays it. The patient identification display 100 may be programmed to cease displaying the patient identification information if the patient bedside device 96 no longer senses the presence of the patient. Patient chairs may be similarly equipped with smart devices to sense the presence of a patient and to convey such information to a patient identification display 100. Further, in order to establish an association with a patient, the security badge 10 may be required to establish a communication link with the patient identification display 100 instead of or in addition to the wrist bracelet 40, which patient identification display 100 would in turn transmit the patient identification information to the security badge 10. This would permit the transfer of patient identification information without the possible necessity of disrupting the patient in order to establish a communication link with the patient's wrist bracelet 40.

If a new patient comes to occupy the patient room 104 or the patient bed 80, the patient identification display 100 would obtain the new patient identification information from the wrist bracelet 40 worn by the patient and may be structured to transmit that information to the Admit, Discharge and Transfer System 166 (FIG. 7) of the computer network 194. Alternatively, the patient identification display 100 could display a request for input indicating whether or not the new patient is to be marked as having been transferred to the instant patient room 104. A patient monitoring device 80 (FIG. 4) or bedside treatment device 178 (FIG. 7) may reject a data exchange request from a security badge 10 if the system user 68 wearing the security badge 10 is not authorized or cleared to diagnose or administer treatment to the patient. FIG. 12 illustrates the contents of the monitoring or treatment device information 380 that the bedside treatment device or patient monitoring device 80 may transmit to the security badge 10 if the data exchange is authorized. As part of a double-audit function, the monitoring device 80 or the bedside treatment device 178 would itself record any data transaction made with a security badge 10.

The present invention also provides a medical container 200 (FIG. 5) equipped with an electronic identification device 224, programmable memory, and two-way communication means 212. In order for a system user 68 to administer medication to a patient, a hospital may make use of a medical container 200 (FIG. 5) according to the present invention, which limits access to the medication disposed within said medication container 200 upon the exchange of identification information between the system user 68's security badge 10 and the medical container 200. FIG. 10 illustrates the medication information 340 that a medical container 200 may transmit to a security badge 10 after access to the medication has been cleared. Preferably, both the security badge 10 and the medical container 200 store

information, including time, staff and patient identification (collectively, "circumstances"), related to the transaction. Access to the medication disposed within the medical container 200 may be conditioned first upon the transfer and clearance of patient and staff identification from the security badge 10 to the medical container 200, in the form of a message generated by the security badge 10 indicative of the circumstances associated with the information or transaction. Receipt of such message and resulting verification of the transaction prevents medication from being inadvertently administered to the wrong patient. Access is provided by releasing the securing latch 232 of the medical container 200. The security badge 10 may also alert the system user 68 via an audible sound, vibration, or other sensational means to remind the system user 68 to administer the appropriate treatment. Means are also provided to permit the system user 68 to indicate that less than the entire amount of medication dispensed within the container 200 was administered. After the medication has been administered, the medical container 200 would preferably be returned to the pharmacy system 186 (FIG. 7), the unit dose medication dispenser 150, or to an appropriate workstation 154 or 155, where information relating to the administration of the medication, including the time, staff, and patient identification, would be transmitted to the computer network 194 for storage in a database 158 or 162.

D. System and Method for Dynamic Formatting and Address Generation of Data Records

One aspect of the claimed invention provides that data records generated, recorded, and/or transmitted by the plurality of smart devices and security badges 10 be formatted and addressed according to uniform standards in order to minimize the need for human intervention in categorizing and archiving the hospital's many patient data records. Preferably, data records are formatted and addressed according to conventions, such as Java and the hyper text markup language (HTML), supporting interactive display by a multimedia display application such as a commercially available Internet browser or similar display, entry, and retrieval program using standardized formatting instructions. By formatting the data record in HTML format or as part of a Java applet or other display-compatible format, the receiving computer terminal or workstation will not need any additional programming or input to display or manipulate the data record. Preferably, formatting and addressing of data records received by the security badge 10 is done partially or entirely by the security badge 10 itself, using timestamps, patient identification, and the base contents 300 (FIG. 8) incorporated into the memory element 262 (FIG. 6) of the security badge 10. In this manner all the information required to handle the data record and to send it to an appropriate database is included in the data record transferred from the security badge 10.

FIGS. 13A through 13C and 14A through 14B illustrate data records relating to the dispensation and administration of medication.

FIGS. 13A through 13C set forth a medication dispensation record 404 after it has been formatted according to HTML and uniform resource locator (URL) conventions. FIG. 13B illustrates the HTML codes incorporated into the medication dispensation record 404. FIG. 13C illustrates the medication dispensation record 404 as it is displayed by a browser 412, including hypertext links 416 and 420, respectively, to the patient's demographic record and the bibliographic record of the system user 68 who dispensed the medication. FIG. 13A illustrates the URL 400 generated

for the medication dispensation record 404 which identifies the location at which it is or will be stored. Preferably, several data elements of a medication dispensation record 404 are stored by the medical container 200 as a medical information structure 340 (FIG. 10) when medicine is dispensed into the medical container 200. The medication dispensation record 404 is transmitted to a security badge 10 as part of a data exchange that takes place when a system user 68 administers the medicine disposed within the medical container 200.

FIGS. 14A through 14B illustrate the medication administration record 440, which is the medication dispensation record 404 (FIG. 13B) as modified by the security badge 10. FIG. 14A illustrates the HTML codes incorporated into the medication administration record 440. A security badge 10 that is associated with a patient will modify a medication dispensation record 404 that it receives from a medical container 200 (FIG. 5). Additions made to the medical administration record 440 include medication quantity fields 456 and 460 (FIG. 14A) indicating how much of the dispensed medicine was administered, provided that the system user 68 (FIG. 3) indicated that less than the full amount of medication dispensed was administered. Other additions include a report type field 448, a patient verification field 452, system user identification 464, and the date and time 468 access to the medical container 200 was provided, presumably indicating the time the medicine was administered. Hidden fields 472, incorporating information to be transmitted along with the record but concealed from view through the browser display, may also be added. Information appropriately concealed may include the initial quantities of medication dispensed, which information may be compared with the amount actually administered. Submit field 476 may be added to provide that contents of the hidden fields 472, including the entered medication quantities, may be transmitted for storage in a database 158 or 162 at the URL address indicated in the form field 444 of the medical administration record 440.

FIG. 14B illustrates the medication administration record 440 as it is displayed by a browser 480, including fields 492 and 496 indicating how much medicine was actually dispensed. When formatted data 440 is transmitted to a computer terminal 60, the security badge 10 may be programmed to emulate a file structure device, wherein the open file command of the browser 480 may be used to request data from the security badge 10.

The medical administration record 440 can be formatted as part of a Java applet and when transferred to a Java enabled computer terminal 60 can be displayed and modified without additional program codes.

While a particular embodiment of the invention has been illustrated and described, it will be obvious to those skilled in the art that various changes and modifications may be made without sacrificing the advantages provided by the principle of construction disclosed herein.

What is claimed is:

1. A method of initiating and maintaining access between a person having a mobile transceiver and data buffering device and an electronic system containing information and connected to a compatible transceiver device, said method comprising the steps of:

- a. authenticating said mobile transceiver and data buffering device with said electronic system;
- b. upon successful completion of said authenticating step, initiating access by one of at least said person and said mobile transceiver and data buffering device to said electronic system;

- c. intermittently generating recommitment signals in said electronic system; and
- d. receiving said recommitment signal in said mobile transceiver and data buffering device and transmitting a recommitment response signal to said electronic system in response thereto, thereby maintaining access to said electronic system.
- 2. The method according to claim 1, further comprising the step of terminating access to said electronic system if said electronic system does not receive said recommitment response signal after one of at least a first preset time period and a first preset number of unanswered recommitment signals.
- 3. The method according to claim 1, further comprising the step of suspending access to said electronic system if said electronic system does not receive said recommitment response signal after one of at least a first preset time period and a first preset number of unanswered recommitment signals.
- 4. The method claim 3, wherein the step of suspending access to said electronic system is implemented by interrupting input to and output from a computer terminal in communication with said electronic system.
- 5. The method according to claim 3, further comprising the step of restoring access to said electronic system if said electronic system does receive said recommitment response signal after one of at least a first preset time period and a first preset number of unanswered recommitment signals but before one of at least a greater second preset time period and a greater second preset number of unanswered recommitment signals.
- 6. The method according to claim 5, further comprising the step of terminating access to said electronic system if said electronic system does not receive said recommitment response signal after one of at least said second preset time period and said second preset number of unanswered recommitment signals.
- 7. The method of claim 2 or claim 6, wherein said electronic system comprises a computer network including a computer terminal having temporary storage.
- 8. The method of claim 7, further comprising the step of conditioning access upon said person's entry of a password.
- 9. The method of claim 7, further comprising the steps of enlarging the connection between said computer terminal and said computer network when access is initiated and restricting the connection between said computer terminal and said computer network when access to said electronic system is terminated.
- 10. The method of claim 7, further comprising the step of removing any said information remaining in said temporary storage of said computer terminal provided that access to said computer network is terminated.
- 11. The method of claim 7, wherein said electronic system and said mobile transceiver and data buffering device employ public key cryptography.
- 12. The method of claim 7, further comprising the step of providing access through an interactive browser interface on said computer terminal.
- 13. A mobile transceiver and data buffering device for staff and data authentication and capable of sharing digital information with a compatible transceiver device, said transceiver and data buffering device comprising:
 - a. a processor;
 - b. means associated with said processor for receiving an interrogation signal transmitted over a wireless medium from said compatible transceiver device;
 - c. means associated with said processor for transmitting an authenticating response over a wireless medium to

- said compatible transceiver device, said authenticating response being responsive to said interrogation signal;
- d. means associated with said processor for receiving intermittent recommitment signals generated by said said compatible transceiver device; and
- e. means associated with said processor for transmitting a recommitment response signal to said compatible transceiver device in response thereto, thereby maintaining access to said compatible transceiver device.
- 14. A controlled-access information system comprising:
 - a. a mobile transceiver and data buffering device for staff and data authentication, said transceiver and data buffering device comprising:
 - a processor;
 - means associated with said processor for receiving an interrogation signal transmitted over a wireless medium from a compatible transceiver device;
 - means associated with said processor for transmitting an authenticating response over a wireless medium to said compatible transceiver device, said authenticating response being responsive to said interrogation signal;
 - means associated with said processor for receiving intermittent recommitment signals generated by said said compatible transceiver device; and
 - means associated with said processor for transmitting a recommitment response signal to said compatible transceiver device in response thereto; and
 - b. a compatible transceiver device connected to said information system and in communication with said mobile transceiver and data buffering device.
- 15. The controlled-access information system of claim 14, further comprising means for terminating access to said information system if said information system does not receive said recommitment response signal after one of at least a first preset time period and a first preset number of unanswered recommitment signals.
- 16. The controlled-access information system of claim 14, further comprising means for suspending access to said information system if said information system does not receive said recommitment response signal after one of at least a first preset time period and a first preset number of unanswered recommitment signals.
- 17. The controlled-access information system of claim 16, further comprising means for restoring access to said information system if said information system does receive said recommitment response signal after one of at least a first preset time period and a first preset number of unanswered recommitment signals but before one of at least a greater second preset time period and a greater second preset number of unanswered recommitment signals.
- 18. The controlled-access information system of claim 17, further comprising means for terminating access to said information system if said information system does not receive said recommitment response signal after one of at least said second preset time period and said second preset number of unanswered recommitment signals.
- 19. The controlled-access information system of claim 15 or claim 18, wherein said information system comprises a computer network including a computer terminal having a data storage device.
- 20. The controlled-access information system of claim 19, further comprising means for accepting entry of a password.
- 21. The controlled-access information system of claim 19, further comprising means for enlarging the connection between said computer terminal and said computer network when access is initiated and restricting the connection

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between said computer terminal and said computer network when access to said information system is terminated.

22. The controlled-access information system of claim 21, wherein said mobile transceiver and data buffering device weighs less than five kilograms and is substantially suitable for attachment to an article of apparel.

23. The controlled-access information system of claim 19, further comprising means in said mobile transceiver and data buffering device for digitally signing communications to be transmitted to said data storage device through said transmission means.

24. A mobile transceiver and data buffering device for staff and data authentication and communication with a plurality of smart devices, said mobile transceiver and data buffering device comprising:

- a. means for identifying a wearer of said mobile transceiver and data buffering device;
- b. a memory for storing information;
- c. means for receiving information carried on a wireless medium for storage to said memory, whereby said plurality of smart devices may communicate with said mobile transceiver and data buffering device;
- d. means for transmitting information from said memory over a wireless medium, whereby said mobile transceiver and data buffering device may communicate with said plurality of smart devices;
- e. means for identifying a first smart device in proximity with said transceiver and data buffering device;
- f. means for automatically extracting information from said first smart device;
- g. means for transmitting said information to a data storage device with which said mobile transceiver and data buffering device is in proximity, whereby information contained in a smart device is uploaded substantially automatically to said mobile transceiver and data buffering device, and later downloaded to said data storage device.

25. The mobile transceiver and data buffering device of claim 24, wherein said plurality of smart devices comprise

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devices selected from the group consisting of computers, instruments, monitors, and treatment devices in a hospital.

26. The mobile transceiver and data buffering device of claim 24, wherein said data storage device comprises a computer terminal.

27. The mobile transceiver and data buffering device of claim 26, wherein said information is associated in said mobile transceiver and data buffering device with a circumstance selected from the group consisting of the date when said information was transmitted to said mobile transceiver and data buffering device, the time when said information was transmitted to said mobile transceiver and data buffering device, the identity of a patient with which said first smart device was associated, and the identity of said wearer of said mobile transceiver and data buffering device.

28. The mobile transceiver and data buffering device of claim 27, further comprising means for generating a message to said smart device indicative of the circumstance with which said information is associated.

29. The mobile transceiver and data buffering device of claim 26, further comprising:

- means for alerting the wearer to impending receipt of information from said first smart device;
- means for permitting the wearer to indicate acceptance of said information from said first smart device.

30. The mobile transceiver and data buffering device of claim 29, further comprising means of digitally signing data records to be transmitted to said data storage device through said transmission means, whereby said data storage device is enabled to authenticate said mobile transceiver and data buffering device as the source of said information.

31. The mobile transceiver and data buffering device of claim 26, wherein said information is received from said first smart device by said transceiver and data buffering device and formatted for storage as a data record in a standardized format.

32. The mobile transceiver and data buffering device of claim 31, wherein said standardized format is the hypertext markup language.

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UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE
CERTIFICATE OF CORRECTION

PATENT NO. : 5,960,085

DATED : September 28, 1999

INVENTOR(S): Carlos de la Huerga

It is certified that error appears in the above-identified patent and that said Letters Patent is hereby corrected as shown below:

At Col. 3, line 61, please delete "inlock" and substitute—unlock—therefor.

At Col. 10, line 40, before "device" insert— components 14, an activation button 18, a microphone and analog-to-digital converter--.

Signed and Sealed this

Eighteenth Day of April, 2000

Attest:



Q. TODD DICKINSON

Attesting Officer

Director of Patents and Trademarks